



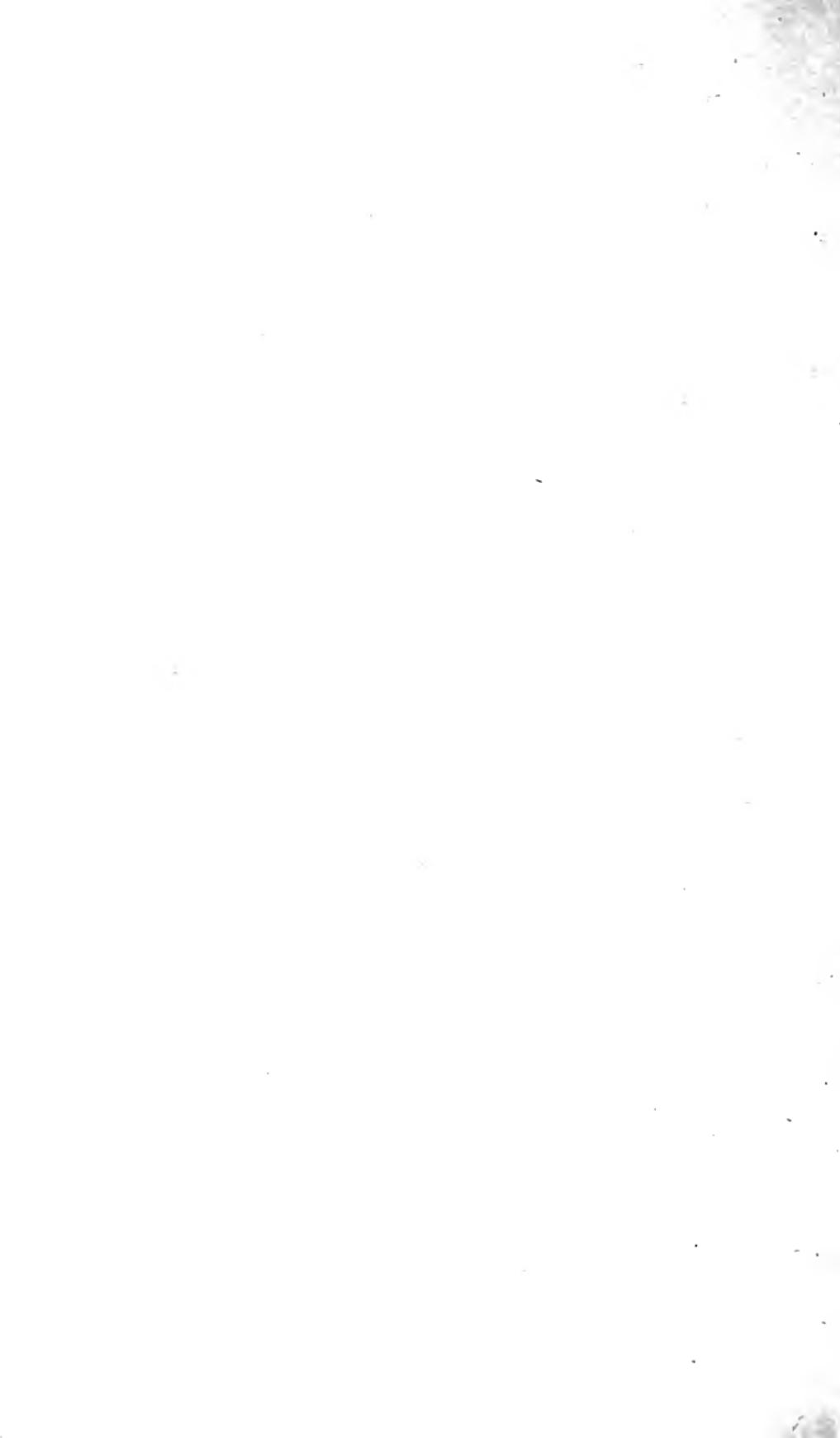


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THE
OLD OAK CHEST:
A TALE OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

“THE GIPSY,” “THE FORGERY,”
“THE WOODMAN,” &c.

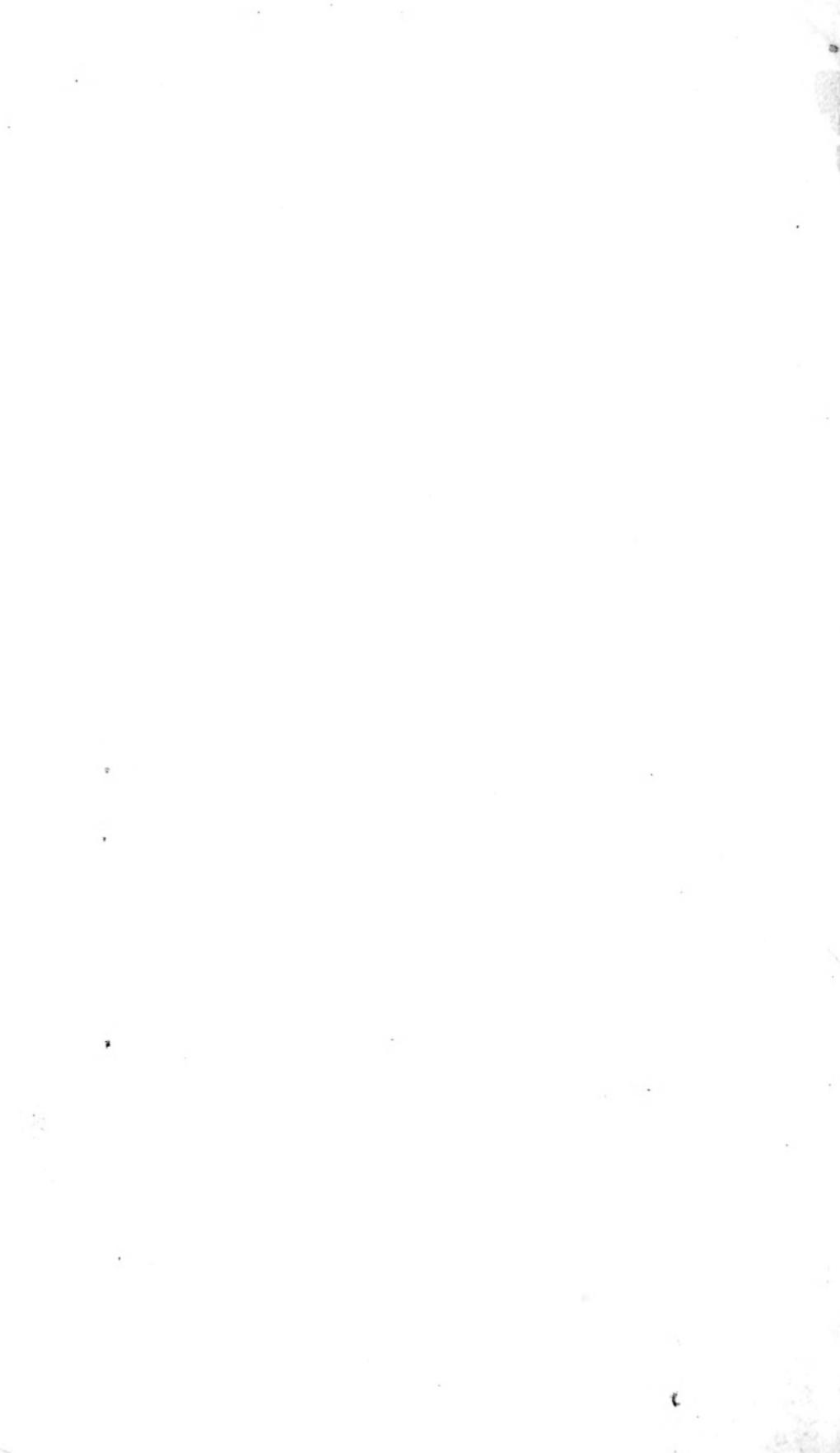
Even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lip.. Shakespeare.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. III.

L O N D O N:

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THE

OLD OAK CHEST.

CHAPTER I.

SIR WILLIAM HALDIMAND walked up and down the drawing-room with a heavy and not very regular step. His face showed the traces of many emotions: his eyes glanced restlessly from side to side: his very limbs displayed the agitation of his mind; for the arms and hands were hardly ever still. Sometimes they were crossed upon his chest, sometimes

hanging by his side, with the fingers moving up and down. Sometimes one hand was raised to his head and pressed upon his brow ; sometimes it was tightly clasped in the other, with the fingers intertwined.

Is *this* the result of success ? Is this the fruit of that for which he has long struggled ? He has accomplished all. He has won all in the dark game he has been playing. The will has been destroyed. Haldistow is his. To his own property, large from the accumulation of many years, is added all the estates of his family, all that they ever possessed. His fortune is princely, his position eminent. He can command where he solicited. He can tyrannise where he cringed. Ministers who refused him honors and emoluments must now humbly ask his support and influence ; and the coronet of the long-coveted peerage seems already to press upon his brow.

But this is not all—nay, this is nothing when compared with another satisfaction.

The object of his fear and of his hatred, she who for years had embittered his rest, and had made him dream night and day of disappointment—she who had been as a serpent in his path, and whom he longed to crush beneath his heel, was now at his mercy. He had trampled upon her at last. He had made her drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs. Close by the corpse of the good old man who had loved her, and whom she had dearly loved, he had reproached, reviled, insulted her. He had told her to go forth from amidst the happy scenes which she had brightened—to abandon for ever all the prosperity which she had enjoyed so gently and employed so well—to become a hireling and a dependent upon others. He had seen her heart wrung and her spirit quail, and her cheek blush, and her eye fill with tears at his words.

All this had he done ; and was it not enough ? What, then, was the cause of this agitation ? Had he sown the hurricane

and reaped the storm ? Did he find the imaginary coronet lined with thorns ? Was the recoil of the blow which he had given in his triumphant rage more terrible to himself than to his victim ?

The mind of Sir William Haldimand was carried back by a power that he could not resist, by a power that he felt, but could not tell what it was, to days in the long past, to a period one and twenty years before. It was compelled to settle upon a moment when he had given way to the same vindictive spirit, when he had crushed, and rent, and torn, another gentle heart, when he had triumphed as fiercely over a sweet and kindly spirit, and piled up for himself a load of remorse and anguish which had weighed upon him through life, notwithstanding all the efforts of stubborn pride to bear the burden lightly. He had never mentioned it to any one ; he had never sought consolation from any being, human or divine ; he had never confessed to the ear of man or God

that he had done wrong ; he had endeavoured to shut his own eyes to the bitter fierceness of his wrath, and to steel his own heart against the anguish produced by its results. But there were darker hours with him, when the spirit sat in judgment on itself, when its eyes were clear from all the film of earth, when the voice was loud and dreadful, when, in spite of vanity and pride, he would have given worlds to recall the act, yet knew that it was irretrievable, and must be his curse through life. We have already seen him in one of those hours ; and now this was another.

He imagined he had cast off the impressions of the preceding day, in the eager activity of this ; but something had led his mind back to the same train of thoughts ; and others, many others, dark and grievous, mingled with them, rendering life's aspect hideous. He felt himself upon the far verge of human existence. The career on which he had set out with fiery hope, lay stretched be-

hind him ; and, as he cast his eyes back upon it, he saw it strewed with ruins. He felt himself like an ambitious prince who had rushed forth to subdue and possess a beautiful country, and had made it a wilderness even in the struggle to conquer it. All was in ruins, even the very edifices which hope had raised and beautified.

This is but a glimpse into the interior of that dark heart. Many another torment was going on within its gloomy prison-cells, as he thus walked up and down in painful meditation. At length he took one of the lights from the table and turned slowly to the dining-room. He had seen pictures on the walls—family portraits which he knew well, and some that seemed new to him ; but he had not looked at them ; for the sight was not pleasing in his eyes. His father, and his mother, and his brothers, those who cherished his infancy and sported with his youth, were there ; but he could derive no comfort from the looks of those dead or alienated. Now,

however, an impulse stronger than his will—one of those strange impulses which often force us to gaze on what we abhor or what we dread—led him back to those pictures. The lights had not yet been extinguished on the table ; and he placed the candle that he carried amongst them, looking round him. The first portrait his eye fell upon was that of his brother, Sir John, very like him as he had last seen him in life. The next was that of Lady Haldimand, in the young beauty amidst which she departed. Then came a newer picture. It was the portrait of her whom he had just been trampling on ; and he recognised it at once. He gazed at it long, took one of the lights, and held it up before the face ; and then exclaimed, “Strange ! Very strange !”

Still there seemed a fascination about that picture ; and he contemplated it long and earnestly. It might be, the exceeding beauty touched him, or the gentle sweetness of the expression, or the joyful smile,

full of the heart's happiness, which, under the pencil of a skilful artist, had been brought to sport around the half-parted lips.

He turned away, and, with a light in his hand, approached another picture which caught his eye on the opposite side of the room. As he came near, he saw that it was the portrait of a girl of about twelve years old, and concluded that it must be an earlier picture of Kate herself ; but another step showed him he was mistaken. There were features that he knew well ; there were looks that filled him with anguish and spoke reproaches to his heart. He trembled in every limb. His hand almost lost its grasp of the light he carried ; and his brain seemed to reel.

At that moment, he heard the roll of a carriage upon the terrace ; and the next instant his servant opened the door in haste to tell him that some one had arrived at the house, and to ask if he was to be admitted.

Sir William Haldimand paused for a moment, set down the light upon the table, and, after a brief struggle, recovered his firmness.

“ Yes,” he said. “ Show him in, whoever he may be.” And then with a slow step, trying to cast from him all remains of what he called a great weakness, he returned to the drawing-room. A moment or two after, he heard the steps of a carriage let down, which sound was succeeded by a singular sort of noise that he could not well account for. It was like that which might be produced by some one striking the stone steps slowly with a heavy stick. At length the drawing-room door was thrown open ; and Doctor Porteus was announced.

The tall, gaunt figure of the old physician presented itself directly afterwards. Sir William Haldimand stared at him with a look of enquiry and surprise, while the Doctor, on his part, advanced calmly into the middle of the room, with an im-

perturbable air ; and, finding that he was not invited to be seated, flung himself unceremoniously into a chair, with his wooden leg sticking out before him.

“ Well, sir, what may be your pleasure with me ?” demanded Sir William Haldimand, in his usual cold and repulsive tone, seeing that the keen grey eyes of the old doctor were measuring him from head to foot.

“ Pleesure with you, mun ?” exclaimed Doctor Porteus. “ De'il a bit o' pleesure hae I wi' you, and dinna expect ony.”

“ Then what do you want here, sir ?” demanded Sir William in a furious tone ; and then, bethinking himself, he added : “ Perhaps, sir, you are not aware that Sir John Haldimand is dead ?”

“ Oo, ay ! the auld man is deed, I ken fu' weel,” answered Doctor Porteus, “ and that you've come into the house and rummaged everything. It minds me o' the words of Elijah the Tishbite : ‘ Hast thou killed and also taken possession ?’ Not that I

mean to say you killed Sir John, mind ye ; for a fit of apoplexy's a keen killer without help ; and I was out of the way, even if I could hae done anything. Foul fa' the folk that keepit me ! But you've taken possession, any how."

" The man must be mad," said Sir William Haldimand, aloud, but in a meditative tone. " What do you want here, sir ? I ask. Have you any business with me ? If not, I beg you will deliver me of your presence. It is disagreeable to me."

" That's plain truth, I'll warrant," replied Doctor Porteus ; " but I see not why you should be delivered mair than mony anither puir body that's sighing for it night and day. But what I want is soon spoken. I want to see the lassie, Miss Katrine Haldimand. The puir thing's wanting comfort, I'm sure, wi' the auld man deed in the house, and you living in it."

" If, sir," said Sir William Haldimand, " you want to see my brother's natural daughter—"

But Doctor Porteus did not suffer him to conclude the sentence. "Your brother's natural daughter, fellow!" he exclaimed. "She's no more your brother's natural daughter than you're my natural son, though, Gud be praised, if she were, he might well be as proud o' her as I should be ashamed o' you. I telt the funkey what I wanted, not expecting to meet a rude man in the drawing-room who would not even ask an auld lamester like mysel' to sit down."

"He'll ask him to get up," said Sir William Haldimand sternly, "and to walk out of this room directly. Neither your infirmities nor your folly give you a right to intrude here."

Doctor Porteus remained perfectly unmoved.

"My right, at all events, is as good as yours," he answered; "for you have no right ava; and I was sent for by those who *have* a right. You're just enjoying your little day, and, like a beggar on

horseback, riding to the de'il ; but it'll soon come to an end, my bra callant ; and ye may be quite sure that I'll no stir a foot—and I've got but ane to stir—till I've seen Miss Katrine Haldimand."

" If you wish to see my brother's natural daughter, sir," replied Sir William, " for as such I have always been taught to look upon her, she has her own room, and her own dressing-room ; and I suppose, from the name given to you, you are privileged to see women in their chambers."

He spoke with a sneer ; but Doctor Porteus attached himself at once to the words, " natural daughter," which he repeated after Sir William, in a tone of angry contempt, adding,

" If ye've been taught to believe her such, nobody's taught ye but yersel' ; and more fule you for believing it. I tell ye she is not."

" And pray how do you know any thing upon the subject ?" demanded Sir

William Haldimand, curiosity getting the better of wrath.

“ Because I brought her into the world,” answered Porteus. “ Kent her mother weel, and something o’ her mother’s husband too. So let’s ha’e nae mair o’ such trash ! I’m thinking the flunkey’s forgotten to tell her that I’m here.”

He had not remarked that Sir William Haldimand’s face had turned a shade paler as he spoke ; but the baronet did not lose command over himself, though he was evidently a good deal “ moved ; and he asked, in as quiet a tone as he could assume,

“ Pray, who were her father and mother ?”

“ I’m no given to clavering of other people’s concerns,” answered Dr. Porteus. “ The bonny lassie hersel’ does na’ ken that I ever saw her, before I cam’ to attend upon her here as a wee bairnie in the measles ; but at the proper time, and to the proper folk, I’ll tell a’. Be sure o’ that.

In the mean while, I'll just thank ye to ring the bell ; for it's no easy ganging wi' my tree leg."

" What you tell me, sir, affects my views very much," replied Sir William Haldimand, with a manner so strangely altered that the change could not escape Dr. Porteus's attention ; and without the slightest hesitation, he rang the bell. " Of course," he continued, when he had so done, " of course, it may be very important for me to know the parentage of this young—"

He hesitated, and then added the word " woman."

But Dr. Porteus instantly snapped at the word.

" Leddy, man ! leddy !" he exclaimed sharply. " She's as good as yersel', or any o' yer forebears by birth—better, perhaps ; and far better by education. But you'll hear nothing from me there-anent, I can tell you."

" Perhaps you will have no objection to tell me," said Sir William Haldimand, in

a wonderfully moderate tone, “where the young lady was born—I have a reason for asking.”

“Just in a wee cot, half a mile outside o’ Dingle,” answered Dr. Porteus. “There can be no harm in telling you that.”

Sir William Haldimand’s groom appeared at this moment in answer to the bell ; and the baronet seated himself in silence, gazing on the floor. But an instant after he raised his head, saying,

“Send up to the young lady’s room, and tell her that Dr. Porteus is here, and desires to see her.”

The man disappeared ; and his master then said, thoughtfully, “At Dingle ?”

The word was pronounced as a sort of question ; and Doctor Porteus replied,

“Ay, just at Dingle. There’s naething wonderful in folk being born at Dingle, ony more than in ither places. There’s no act o’ Parliament agen it.”

Sir William Haldimand answered not, but remained musing till the servant re-

turned. The man was a saucy fellow who had no delicacies on any subject ; and, though his face expressed a little surprise, he gave his intelligence without pause or hesitation. “ The young lady is not there, Sir William,” he said. “ The people say she’s gone, and her maid gone with her. The candles are out, and all the drawers and things locked up.”

Sir William Haldimand started on his feet, and Doctor Porteus rose also.

“ Gone!” exclaimed the baronet. “ Gone! Impossible! Has any carriage been here for her ?”

“ No, sir,” replied the man. “ She’s gone on foot ; and she certainly is gone.”

“ This is very strange,” exclaimed Sir William, in a tone rather of anger than of compassion, “ to go in a dark night like this when I told her she might remain till to-morrow !”

“ Then ye *did* tell her she was to go !” exclaimed Doctor Porteus, with high indignation in his look and air. “ You who

have no right whatever in this house. . Man, man, what hae ye done! Ye told her she was to go. I know it all. I see it all—Ye bully-ragged her. Ye abused her. Ye spoke ill of the kind old man that's deed and gane ; and she would not bide in the same house wi' ye, though she had the right here and ye had nane. Ay, but ye'll repent it yet. In sack-cloth and ashes will ye repent, though yer heart be harder than the nether mill-stane. Ye shall rue this day as ye have never rued anything : be sure o' that, William Haldimand."

" Shall I turn him out, sir ?" demanded the saucy groom.

" Turn me out, ye vagabond!" exclaimed the old doctor, setting his wooden leg firm upon the ground. " I'll tell ye what, saucy cockney : gin I had twa feet, I'd use one o' them in kicking ye into the park, and the other in kicking yer master after ye ; and, having but ane, I defy ye baith to lay a hand on me. I've lathered better men than either o' the twa, lang since I lost

a leg o' flesh and took to the stump o' a tree. Make way, sir, and open the door o' the hall ; for if I come near ye, I'll gie ye sic a dunder o' the chaps as 'll make ye blush for the first time in all yer saucy life."

Thus saying, he moved towards the door, the man reverently getting out of his way ; for there was something so stern and determined in the tall old man's hale and ruddy countenance, that the scoundrel groom felt his boast of turning him out might not be easily executed. At the door of the drawing-room, Doctor Porteus paused for an instant, and, turning towards Sir William Haldimand, raised his hand with a warning gesture.

" Ye will repent this, man," he said, in a stern and solemn tone. " Ye will repent this to the last day o' yer life. If ill come to that dear lassie, driven from her home in the night, her blood be upon you, William Haldimand ; and may God avenge her !"

He then stumped through the hall to the terrace, entered his carriage, and drove away.

The groom had remained in the drawing-room; and he looked at his master, expecting to see one of those bursts of rage which were not at all unfrequent with Sir William Haldimand. The baronet, however, stood where he had risen, motionless and silent, with his eyes fixed on the floor. For some moments, he did not seem even to notice the man's presence; but, when he raised his eyes and saw him standing there with an inquiring look, he waved his hand sharply, as a sign for him to quit the room. When he was obeyed, he sank slowly into a chair, and covered his eyes with his hands.

“I will be satisfied,” he said, at length. “I will be satisfied in regard to this matter.” And, rising up, he took a key from his pocket, gazed at it for an instant or two as if with some hesitation, and then replaced it. After that, he took up a light

again ; and then, going forth, he mounted the great staircase and proceeded straight to Kate's apartments. On entering the dressing-room, he looked round, with an expression of sadness and dejection not at all usual with him, and then took up some of the little objects on the table, most of which bore some mark of, or reference to, the late tenant of the room. The writing-book was stamped with K. H. in large letters of gold. The table seal bore the same cipher, and in a beautiful copy of Thomson's Seasons, was written, in a hand he knew right well, "To his dear adopted daughter, Kate, from her affectionate father, John Haldimand."

Going to the book-shelves he took down several other volumes, one after another, and looked into each. He then seemed better satisfied, and murmured to himself, " Not a trace. This must be some trick—some trick of that brutal old Scot ; and I will make him smart for it. No man shall insult me, unpunished."

A moment or two after, he said, “There can be no trick in the likeness, however. It is very extraordinary!—and yet it may be accidental. She has the Haldimand eyes—but the mouth, the mouth, that comes from a different race: those small arched lips, just parting enough to show the pearly teeth, and the round faultless chin! I will see farther.” And, opening the door of the bed-room, he went in, carrying the light with him. The toilet-table was covered with a multitude of little ornaments and some articles of jewellery, amongst which was a ring, bearing upon it the representation of a dove, and, underneath, the letters, E. H. Sir William Haldimand shook when he examined it, but then laid it down upon the table again, saying, “Most likely one of his wife’s. It may mean Elizabeth as well as Emily. Her name was Elizabeth.”

But, as he raised his eyes, he saw a picture on the opposite side of the room. It was a fine copy of the picture of a young girl in the

dining-room below ; and on the frame was written in large black letters : “ Emily Haldimand, aged twelve years and three months.”

Sir William Haldimand trembled violently ; but he continued to gaze for several minutes. What was in his heart at that moment, who shall tell ? But it must have been something very terrible and very potent too ; for, as he gazed, the tears rose in his eyes, overflowed, fell down his cheeks like the drops of a thunder-shower ; and his breast heaved with struggling sighs almost convulsive. Seating himself in an arm-chair, again and again he wiped away the drops ; and again and again he gazed.

They were the first tears he had shed since boyhood.

CHAPTER II.

IN every house there is always one person who knows more of what is going on in it than all the rest of the household put together. It is rarely the master or mistress. It may be some inquisitive child : it may be some still, quiet servant maid : it may be a prying maiden aunt, or an all-investigating butler. Vain, vain the hope to keep anything secret from this animated news-bag ! By a sort of fatality, rather than skill, it receives intimation from some source or another of everything that is taking place ; and, though in general, as a condition of its success in its perquisitions, it has a habit of retention as well as a great

capacity of reception, and rarely retails what it receives, yet it will sometimes bring forth very awkward facts at very awkward moments.

A larger sphere is possessed by that house which is in every village, and towards which, as if by some magnetic or other attraction, all the news of the place flies as soon as it is let loose. Nothing takes place at the parsonage, or at the manor house, or at the surgeon's, or at the post-office—nay, anywhere, from the hovel to the palace—that is not known in half an hour at Mrs. Jones's or Mrs. Jenkins's, or whosoever the news-receptacle may be. But here so much *reticence* is not required or practised; for the tellers of the tale generally tell it that it may be told again, even when they commend it most carefully to secrecy.

Now, by a very natural concatenation of circumstances the house in, at, or near, the village of Haldistow, in which all the wandering and destitute news of the place

found refuge, was no other than the lodge at the gates of Haldistow park. I have said “by a very natural concatenation of circumstances ;” and so indeed it was ; for the reader will remember that that lodge was situated on the road from Haldistow to Tom Notbeame’s and the Mere, and thence to Halcombe and Airmouth. It was placed also exactly between the village and the hall, and also on the road from both towards Dingle. Thus, whether it was a carrier going with goods between any of the before-named places, or a servant bearing a note or message, or a wandering stranger enquiring his way, or a post-boy with his return horses, or a pedlar trudging with his pack, or one of those known beggars, then common in England, who seemed privileged to demand bread or pence, notwithstanding the Vagrant Act, in return for a certain amount of tittle tattle, which they carried from place to place, each proprietor of intelligence had an opportunity of disposing of a part of his wares at the

lodge of Haldistow Park, and seldom failed to take advantage of it.

The park-keeper was an old servant of the family, in his seventy-first year, sound and active in intellect, but sorely decrepid in body. He had his house and a small pension from Sir John Haldimand, and nothing on earth to do but to open the gates occasionally. He was therefore necessarily fond of gossip ; for with such very narrow occupation it was naturally pleasant to him to know all the occupations of others. His wife was a bustling dame, full twenty years younger than himself, who listened and asked questions, and held her tongue when it pleased her to do so, with great diligence and perseverance. She had a good deal more sense than her old mate, a shrewd knowledge of human character, and a good deal of insight into human life. She was therefore a very much more prudent confidant than old Joseph Gorson her husband ; and persons who wanted a little salutary advice, without

the risk of betrayal of their secrets, applied to Mrs. Gorson and eschewed Joseph.

It was at the gate of their neat and really comfortable dwelling, towards eight o'clock in the evening, that the gig or chaise of Tom Notbeame drew up after he left the court of Haldistow Hall. He was a great favorite with the worthy couple of the lodge, especially with Mrs. Gorson ; for she looked upon his fits of taciturnity as so many periods of profound wisdom, and respected him accordingly. On this occasion, she had hurried to open the gates as soon as she heard the sound of wheels ; but Tom Notbeame deliberately drew in the reins, and jumping out, fastened the horse to the iron railing which ran between the park gates and the regular wall. John, the coachman, descended too ; and the pair entered the house, saying a word or two to Mrs. Gorson as they went. There was a little brick floor passage at the entrance, leading to the tidy parlour ; and in this passage were placed several respectable

looking trunks and portmanteaus. At the sight of them, Tom Notbeame halted short, saying—

“Please Mrs. Gorson, show us a light. I want to look at these things.”

A light was soon procured, when the name of Mr. Hush, passenger, became plainly visible upon each of the packages. Tom Notbeame mused. Whether it was that he had not a scrap of a ballad ready and applicable, or that a silent fit was returning upon him, or that he had not quite made up his mind how to act, I cannot tell; but he walked silently into the little parlour, shook hands with old Gorson without saying a word, and sat down staring at the candle.

In the meantime, however, Mrs. Gorson and the coachman were carrying on the conversation, not a word of which escaped the ears of Tom Notbeame, while old Gorson kept up a running commentary upon his wife's discourse, addressed to the landlord of the Haldimand Arms.

“Fine doings there at the Hall, Mrs. Gorson,” said the coachman. “I never thought to see the like, and poor Sir John just dead too.”

“Well, it is sad to think of his being taken,” said Mrs. Gorson, “and the very man whom he so much disliked, seizing upon everything.”

“Ay, Mr. William was quite ready at the minute,” said old Gorson, across to Tom Notbeaine; “for Bob, the pedlar, who will be seventy-three next January, saw him over at Dingle a week before, sneaking about like a strange dog looking for bones.”

“And so he’s turned you all out, John,” said Mrs. Gorson, after a short pause; “and I daresay, never paid you a penny of wages.”

“O yes, he paid wages, ma’am,” replied the coachman. “I should not have thought of going without, and had half a mind to stay anyhow; but he’s turned

all the head men-servants off, sure enough."

"I wonder you *did* go," replied the good dame. "He did not hire you; and I think I should have staid."

"Ay, ay; but the lawyer said he had a right," chimed in old Gorson. "The head housemaid told me she had heard it with her own ears."

"You see, ma'am," replied the coachman, "we had a consultation with Mr. Hush, and we all determined that it would be better to go. So I did as the rest did."

"Hush be hanged!" said Tom Not-beame; and old Gorson said, in a half whisper—

"Ay, he's a bad one—always has been a bad one—always will be a bad one. I wonder my wife took his things in."

"I'm very glad she did," said Tom Not-beame.

"I'm not quite sure of that Mr. Hush," said Mrs. Gorson to the coachman. "I know what I know; but I don't say anything."

“ Why, he was always going or sending to Dingle when Mr. William was there,” said old Gorson, and ‘specially when Sir John was ill of the pleurisy. I’ll warrant everything was as well known at Dingle as at Haldistow ; and then this fellow of a groom who has come over with Mr. William, used to meet him at the back of the park every day.”

“ Every day ?” said Tom Notbeame. “ *I* saw them only twice.”

“ I’ve seen them more than that,” said old Gorson. “ Besides, Peggy, who did out his room, told me she found a file there and a whole heap of iron filings upon the floor.”

“ Ha !” said Tom Notbeame.

“ I wonder what he could be doing, filing iron up in his room,” said Mrs. Gorson.

“ What has that to do with his sending over to Dingle, old gentleman ?” asked the coachman.

“ Lord, how can I tell ?” replied old Gorson. “ It only showed that he had queer ways with him altogether. I dare say it

had nothing to do with his sending over to Dingle at all."

"But I can tell you it *had*," exclaimed Tom Notbeame, rising abruptly. "What I mean is this. Mrs. Gorson, you must not on any account whatever suffer one of these boxes of his to be taken from your house till I've got a search-warrant to see what is in them. Matthew Hush is a vagabond. He has cheated all these good fellows into thinking that he and Master William have quarrelled, when he has been cogging with him all the time; but I'll have it out one way or another. I'll have every scrap of his things looked into. I'm a constable, Mrs. Gorson; and I tell you not to give those things up."

"Is that law?" asked Mrs. Gorson cautiously.

"Yes, it *is* law," replied Tom Notbeame, who had his own peculiar views on that subject as on many others; "and I'll make it good, Mrs. Gorson."

A bold assertion is the most powerful

of all arguments, inasmuch as it is sure to convince all the weak and ignorant, and nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of every thousand throughout the whole of the rest of the world.

“ Well, well, Tom,” said Mrs. Gorson, “ if you say so, it must be so; for you say little enough at any time; and you were always book-learned, from a boy.”

“ *It is* law,” repeated Tom Notbeame, even more resolutely than before; but then he added an asseveration which would have shaken conviction in many people, though it had not that effect upon good Mrs. Gorson. “ *It is* law,” he said, “ and I’ll make it law in any court in Europe.”

The worthy lady to whom he spoke had a great respect for Tom Notbeame. She had known him from his youth, had seen him rise above the prejudices of those who were wont to call Tom a fool, establish himself in the good graces both of Sir John Haldimand and his brother Richard, become a prosperous and well-doing man, and retain a

high character for integrity and good conduct.

“ Well then, I won’t let them go,” said she, in answer to his last declaration. “ But what am I to do if they try to take them by force?”

“ Put them into the coal-cellar,” answered Tom Notbeame, “ and lock them up. Here, I and John coachman will carry them in for you. Then you can say they are in my custody, and tell whoever asks, that I am constable for Haldistow-cum-Halcombe.”

“ That I will,” answered Mrs. Gorson; for Haldistow-cum-Halcombe was a grand word in her estimation. And the boxes were carried in.

“ Now, Mrs. Gorson,” said Tom, in a solemn tone, “ it is necessary to do things regular, so I shall go at once, and swear an information, and get a search-warrant.

“ Well, that’s all right,” answered the lady. “ I declare I dreamed a dream last night, that I saw Matthew Hush in the pillory.”

“ Well, it may be so, good dame,”
answered Tom Notbeame; “ but

‘Swevens* are swift, master, quoth John,
As the wind that blows o'er a hill;
For iff itt be never so loude this nighte,
To-morrow it may be still.’”

Mrs. Gorson didn’t understand a word of what he meant; but she thought it very fine, though she could not conceive why he called her “ master.” She hesitated for a moment as she saw him walk to the door in order to regain his gig; but, before either he or the coachman could get into it, the good dame had overcome her caution, and, running out, she exclaimed,

“ Here, Tom, here. I want to speak with you.” Then approaching close, she said in a whisper, “ You had better look in at Martyr’s as you go by. Master Hush left all the heavy things here; but he took a little box away with him under his arm:

* Sween (*Saxon*), a dream.

and he went down that way; for young Bill Martyr, the son, told my old man so not half an hour ago."

"What sort of a box was it?" asked Tom Notbeame.

"A little black box covered with leather," replied the lady, "much about the size of Jack Crowder's fiddle-case; may be not so big."

"I'll see after it," answered the landlord of the Haldimand Arms; and being safely deposited in his gig he drove through the gates, which Mrs. Gorson held open for him.

He had not been gone ten minutes when Susan, our fair Kate's attendant, came down to tell the people at the lodge that her young lady had gone over to Halcombe, if any one enquired for her, "because she could not stay in the house with that man who had bullied and abused her in a terrible manner." Susan, it is true, had witnessed none of the facts, yet she related them in a tone of authority; and

Mrs. Gorson exclaimed : “ Goodness gracious, to think of that ! ” But then a point connected with her own special avocations suggested itself to her mind, and she said : “ You don’t mean she has gone, Susan, but that she is going ; for I’m sure no carriage has passed through here.”

“ Ah, poor thing, she is forced to go on foot,” answered Susan. “ He won’t let her have a carriage, not he. Not that she’s going to walk all the way to Halcombe, Mrs. Gorson, but down to Tom Notbeame’s to get his gig. So I must go ; for she’s half way down there already, I dare say.”

“ There now ! ” cried Mrs. Gorson. “ Was ever anything so unlucky ? Why, Tom has just been down here with his gig ; but I’ll tell you where you can catch him in a minute, Susan. He’s gone down to Martyr, the blacksmith’s ; and he’ll stay there some time, I dare say. After that, he’s going, Lord knows where. So you had better run and catch him.”

Off Susan set as hard as she could go,

thinking that, as Kate had promised to walk slowly, she could still make up for lost time by hurrying her own pace. When she reached the house of the blacksmith, however, no gig appeared at the door ; the fire in the stithy was extinguished ; and it was long before she could make the people in the house hear her. At length, however, Mrs. Martyr herself opened the door ; and great was the good woman's surprise and indignation at hearing that her foster child had been driven from the home of her youth.

“ Poor dear ! why didn’t she come here ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Martyr. “ It may be but a poor place ; but still there is not any one in the house that would not go down on their knees to make her comfortable.”

Of course Susan was obliged to explain, and then to satisfy Mrs. Martyr by giving her all the details of the late proceedings at the Hall. She vowed all the time that she could not stay, that she was in a great hurry, &c., and ended by telling what

she should have told at first, that her young lady was already on the road to Tom Notbeame's. Then came consultations long and deep as to what was to be done. Tom Notbeame had gone on, Mrs. Martyr affirmed, to the mansion of Sir Harry Hillhouse, the nearest magistrate ; but then Hillhouse Park was at the distance of full ten miles ; and there was no knowing when he might return. They settled it, however, in conclave, that it would be much better for Kate to return to Haldistow and take up her abode for the time at the house of her foster-mother.

“ It will all be set right about the will very soon, I'm sure,” said Mrs. Martyr ; “ and then she can go back to the Hall, and be a great lady again ; for everybody knows that Sir John left her all he had in the world. You go after her, Susan, and bring her back. I can't send Martyr with you, for he's tired and gone to bed ; and the two boys are out ; but, if you'll go, I'll get everything ready in the mean

while. There's quite a nice room which my man built last year close to the stithy, to make sure that it was always warm and dry. I'll just put some sheets to air ; and it'll be all right by the time you come back."

Susan set out upon her way, and hurried on quickly enough. She was not the least frightened ; for the road was so well known to her that it seemed as if she were walking about her own home ; but she was a little anxious at seeing no traces of her mistress, and began to think that, what between her conversation here and her conversation there, and the circuit she had made to reach the blacksmith's house and then return to the road, she had lingered somewhat too long, especially when she arrived at the end of the Mere without having caught a single glimpse of Kate. She looked forward ; she looked around as she came near the Haldimand Arms ; but she saw nothing of her young lady ; and then thinking, " She has gone into the

house most likely," the girl entered, and inquired for her mistress.

Nobody had heard or seen anything of her. Stephen, and another dismissed servant of Sir John Haldimand, soon caught the intelligence of what had happened ; and alarm spread through the house. A search was instantly commenced in the neighbourhood ; but neither in the garden, nor on the moor around, nor by the water-side, could any trace of Kate be discovered. She was gone ; but, whither or by what means, no one could find out ; and Susan returned to Mrs. Martyr's with the painful intelligence of the disappearance of her young mistress.

CHAPTER III.

THE whole village of Haldistow was in a state of commotion. The rumour spread far and wide that Miss Haldimand had disappeared. Poor Mrs. Martyr wept bitterly ; and Susan cried sympathetically. The good blacksmith was roused from his bed, and set out to seek the young lady. The two sons were despatched after him as soon as they came home ; and many another person joined in the search ; but it was all in vain. Day dawned ; and Kate was not found.

From the feelings expressed—and from the feelings really experienced—one would have thought the villagers had each lost a

child or a sister. Indeed she might almost be considered as such. At least, in some degree, as such they themselves did consider her. She had been brought amongst them strangely, exciting both curiosity and interest in her childhood ; and they had seen her grow up amongst them, the love and admiration of all around. No one could recollect a harsh word that she had spoken, nor a cold look that she had given. Many an act of kindness and consideration was remembered by all. Many had profited by her bounty or been aided by her counsel, or been soothed by her sympathy.

When the day rose, then, and the tidings became general, those whose hearts were sad enough before from the death of their great benefactor and friend were saddened more than ever by the unexplained fate of one whom he and they had loved. Some almost went beside themselves with anxiety and fear ; and amongst them were several who might have been expected to feel the event the least. There

was the old man who kept the shop, for instance, who had lived for sixty-three years in single unblessedness, making money by half-pence and farthings and half farthings, whom everybody believed to care for nothing on earth but himself—a little snipe-faced man, marked with the small-pox, his hair powdered with flour, and pigtailed—even he sat down in the dark corner behind his counter, and wept like a child. The half-witted man of the village, too, whom the boys called Daddie Nicol, and to whom even less perceptions than he had were attributed, learned the news somehow or another ; and after that, for the whole morning long, he walked up and down before the church-yard, saying in a sad and solemn tone, “It’s all done ! It’s all done now ! One’s dead ; and the other’s lost. It’s all done now !”

Amongst the last people who heard of the event which had caused so much distress in the village were the servants at the Rectory. They were three old people,

two women and a man ; for to that number had Mr. Richard Haldimand limited himself after his wife's death. They were very quiet good folks, who had gradually, by long service with the worthy rector, been drilled out of the habits of gossip and gadding about, which seems more or less indigenous in country villages, and the first news they had of poor Kate's disappearance was brought by the old gardener who was an out-door servant. The effect, however, was great in proportion to the paucity of their emotions.

The old man, who had known Kate from her infancy, felt almost as much as when the dead body of his mistress had been brought back from the sea-side ; and for a while he could neither think nor act. He knew what would be the anguish of his master if any accident happened to Miss Haldimand ; he knew what would be the agony of "Master Charles," as he continued to call Colonel Haldimand in the true Dominie Sampson spirit ; and as he

had always entertained the very worst idea of Sir William Haldimand, and had heard moreover of many of his doings during the preceding day, he at once determined in his own mind that the new baronet must have made away with the young lady on finding that she was to be the heiress of Haldistow.

“I will go down to the village, Mrs. Maraday,” he said, addressing the old cook and housekeeper, as soon as he had recovered composure. “I will go down into the village, and talk to Martyr and his wife. Something must be done directly ; and I will have the body found at all events before night.”

“The body !” screamed Mrs. Maraday, “the body ! Why, you don’t think she’s been murdered, surely.”

“There’s no knowing, ma’am, there’s no knowing,” said the butler. “Heirs and heiresses have been put out of the world to make way for others before now, as well as the children in the wood. But at all events, something must be done.” And taking his

hat, he proceeded to the blacksmith's accordingly. There he learned much which confirmed his suspicions ; and, as the conference was held in the stithy where one or two persons were already talking over the affair when he arrived, a number more were soon added ; and a regular council was held. The butler's doubts and suspicions quickly communicated themselves to the rest of the villagers and puzzled them greatly how to act, till, at length, a bold suggestion was made by the smallest personage of the party, namely, the keeper of the shop, that they should go up in a body to the Hall and demand some account of Miss Haldimand at the hands of Sir William.

This suggestion tickled the fancies of all present ; and they instantly decided upon adopting it.

“ We must be very careful what we say,” said the butler ; “ for it won’t do, you know, to charge him with murder till we are sure.”

“ Ay, that’s what I’ve been thinking of,”

said Martyr. "If I was but sure, hang me if I wouldn't knock his brains out with that hammer."

"We had better take Miss Susan up with us," said the shop-keeper.

"I shouldn't wonder if Master Hush had something to do with this," said another man in the shop. "I remember when he was a lad he would do anything that any one set him upon. I know he stole Sir John's venison ; and, though he's kept himself respectable enough since he's been here, yet he never took notice of any of his old acquaintances ; and that's always a bad sign of a man."

"So it is, so it is," said many voices ; but Jack Martyr mused. "I don't know what to think of it," he said, at last. "Tom Notbeame was here last night ; and he has a bad notion of Master Hush. Now Tom says very little ; but he sees a long way. However, we had better go up to the Hall. Some of you go and call Susan ; she slept at our house last night."

This was accordingly done ; and after some farther conferences and preliminary arrangements, the whole party, thirteen or fourteen in number, set out for the Hall in procession.

They paused for a short time at the lodge as if it were necessary that everything that passed should pay toll of information there, and then advanced up the avenue, one or two beginning to feel a little nervous at the idea of confronting Sir William Haldimand. The worthy blacksmith, who walked first, however, experienced no such sensations. He could recollect the new baronet as a young man. He remembered his struggle for the county, and many an act of meanness and many an act of violence which he had prompted, if he did not perform. So that a certain feeling of contempt was mingled with dislike and suspicion in the bosom of the honest artisan. He had changed his coat, and washed his face and hands, it is true, before he set out ; but that was because he

was going to the Hall, not from any respect for William Haldimand. As the people of the village were accustomed to do, the whole party proceeded to a back door, which opened into the great court-yard ; and the blacksmith rang the bell without giving time for any farther deliberation. Two or three of the stable servants, who had been retained to look after the horses, came out and spoke to their friends from the village ; but before much could be told in the way of gossip, Sir William's groom appeared, and demanded, in his usual swaggering and insolent manner, what the people wanted.

“ We want to see Sir William Haldimand,” replied the blacksmith ; “ for so I am told we are to call him.”

“ But what’s your business, my good man ?” demanded John. “ I must know that first.”

“ Then first I’ll tell you I’m not *your* good man,” replied the burly blacksmith. “ I never was any one’s man but my

own." And his eye glanced somewhat contemptuously at the fellow's livery. "Then secondly, I'll tell you that our business is with Sir William Haldimand, not with you."

"But suppose he doesn't choose to see you, Master What's-your-name?" said the groom, half disposed to decline announcing the party.

"Then we will walk in," replied Martyr, "and see him whether he chooses it or not."

"Do you mean me to tell him so?" demanded the Londoner, who believed that his master's dignity was sufficient to overawe any score of clowns in the country.

"You may if you like," replied the blacksmith; "for it's quite true, as you'll find."

"Be so good as to tell him first," interposed the snipe-faced shopkeeper, in a softer tone, "that we wish to speak with him particularly, as I term it; that we are the people of Haldistow, as I may say, and

that we want to speak with him on a matter of importance, as I may call it."

With a bad grace the man retired, and informed his master, who was trying to eat his breakfast with very little success, that a dozen or two of the people of Haldistow desired to see him.

"What do they want?" demanded Sir William Haldimand, sharply.

"They won't say, sir, and are devilish saucy, too," replied the man. "All I could get out of them was that they wanted to see you, and *would* see you, whether you liked it or not."

"Oh, very well," exclaimed Sir William Haldimand, the ireful spirit rising to resist. "They shall be gratified. I have not forgotten them; and I will take care, before I have done with them, that there shall be very few county voters left in Haldistow. Show them into the hall. I will meet them there."

A minute or two passed; and then the sound of feet announced that the villagers

were in the hall. William Haldimand drew himself up, walked out, and gazed coldly round him upon the many persons who now crowded the space between the door of the drawing-room, and the glass doors leading to the terrace. Two or three of the more shame-faced were hanging about behind the rest, affecting to look out of the windows, as if they had nothing at all to do with the affair ; but the greater part were moved by higher and stronger emotions ; and in most of these, the resolution with which they set out was not in the least degree shaken. They were poor, illiterate men ; but, under the teaching of their good rector, and with one or two high examples before their eyes, they had acquired a sort of moral strength, which is not often to be found in a much mixed population. Their emotions were few ; their affections were limited ; their knowledge was small ; but when their emotions were roused, they were strong ; their affections were warm and

permanent ; and they knew what was right, if they did not always know how to set about it.

After his stare round, which Martyr, for his part, returned carelessly with his arms crossed upon his chest, Sir William Haldimand demanded abruptly, without greeting or introduction, and in the harshest possible tone,

“ What do you all want ? ”

“ I’ll tell you, sir,” said Martyr, “ and that as shortly as may be. Yesterday, when good Sir John, our landlord, died, there was a young lady in this house, whom he had adopted. A dearer, better young lady never lived. You came in here, took possession of everything, turned her out, or pretended to turn her out ; and she has since disappeared. Now, what we want to know is, what you have done with her.”

The wrath of Sir William Haldimand had risen high at the man’s tone and at his words ; and he could hardly bring himself to let Martyr conclude his speech, brief as

it was. But the word, “disappeared,” like water cast upon a flame, extinguished his anger at once by a new passion.

“Disappeared!” he echoed in a tone of surprise. “What do you mean by disappeared? I neither turned her out last night, nor pretended to turn her out. I told her she might stay till this morning.”

“We know nothing about that, Sir William,” said the little shop-keeper, in a nervous and excited tone. “All which we know is that the dear young lady—the best young lady that ever lived, as I may call her—was somehow or another driven out, last night, into your park, as I term it, and disappeared there. No one knows where she has gone to; no one has seen her since. Every place round has been searched, both last night and to-day; and we will know the bottom of this awful affair, as I term it.”

Sir William Haldimand was confounded; and even his saucy groom looked blank; for he had sense enough to perceive that

the story would not tell well for his master. The baronet gazed round with a look of consternation which, if the villagers had been any great judges of human nature, they would have seen could not be assumed; but when a man has established an evil reputation, he does not easily get credit even for the most natural emotions.

“It’s all a sham,” thought Martyr.

“He’s trying to cheat us,” said the little shop-keeper to himself.

At length the baronet’s eye fell upon the girl, Susan, whose nerves having been upset by all the events of the preceding day and night, had been moved to a fresh gush of tears by the eloquence of the little shop-keeper.

“Who are you?” cried Sir William, pointing to her with his finger. “I have seen you about the house—who are you? What do you know of this affair?”

“I am Miss Haldinand’s maid, sir—at least I was when she was living, poor thing!” sobbed Susan, convulsively.

“Then what has become of her?” demanded the baronet, fiercely. “They told me you had gone with her.”

“I went with her into the park, sir,” answered Susan, wiping her eyes. “As far as that I did go when you drove her out last night; but I went down to the lodge; and I have never seen her since.”

“*I* drive her out, fool!” exclaimed Sir William, furiously.

The gentle term he applied to her roused Susan’s wrath ; and an angry woman can generally contrive to say something more bitter than that which has called up her indignation.

“I don’t mean to say, sir,” she retorted, “that you turned her out by the shoulders ; but she told me, poor thing, that you had come to her room and said things to her and used language that would not let her remain in the same house with you. And that’s something worse than turning out, I think. I may be a fool; very likely I am ; but I know what is the con-

duct of a gentleman, at least, and what is not." And she made him a curtsey.

"How came you to leave her?" demanded Sir William Haldimand, in a deep, stern tone.

"Because she sent me," replied the girl. "She sent me to the ledge to tell the lodge-keepers that she was gone to Halcombe, if her guardians arrived; and I was to meet her at the gate from the meadow into the road on the way to Tom Notbeame's, where she was to get a chaise. I was not two minutes, I'm sure; but she was not at the gate nor anywhere down the road; nor at Tom Notbeame's either. They had not heard a word about her there, indeed; for I soon gave the alarm."

"She was searched for far and near," said the blacksmith, fixing his eyes full upon the baronet. "I searched for her. My two sons did the same. All the servants you turned out searched for her; and she is not to be found. The last place where she was seen was in your park.

The girl tells me that, as she was going down the road, she saw lights pass along the front of the house, and one of the side doors open ; and we *will* know what has become of the young lady ; for we all love her as our own child."

" This is the strangest affair that ever happened," said Sir William Haldimand, thoughtfully ; " and the matter must be investigated to the bottom instantly. Has any one been to Halcombe ?"

" Yes, sir. Stephen, the footman, went all the way to Halcombe and enquired everywhere," replied the shop-keeper ; " but she was not to be heard of, as I term it. He told me so himself this morning, and is gone to make farther inquiry, as I may call it."

Sir William Haldimand put his hand to his head, evidently much agitated and alarmed.

" Something more must be done," he said at length. " Two or three of you come in here with me to consult upon this

matter." He opened the door of the drawing-room ; but, before he entered, he said to his servant : " See who that is ringing the bell."

The servant departed, and returned in a minute or two to the drawing-room, where he found his master in eager discussion with two or three of the people from the village, as to the search which had been made and the steps that were still necessary to be taken. He bent down by Sir William's chair, saying in a low voice :

" Sir Harry Hillhouse presents his compliments, sir, and—"

" Curse the foolish fellow!" muttered his master. " Tell him I am very busy on matters of importance, and cannot attend to anything else just now.—Say anything you like ; but I cannot see him.—There, nothing more now. You can tell me what he says afterwards."

He waved his hand for the man to depart, and then turned towards the little shopkeeper who had been in the act of speaking when the interruption occurred.

“ What I was saying, Sir William,” continued the little man, “ was this. I would have the great pond, as I term it, or the Mere, as it may be called, dragged, all along the edges where she may have thrown herself in.”

“ Good God!” exclaimed Sir William, striking his hand against his brow, in agony inconceivable ; but the little man went on with the utmost pertinacity, stirring up every feeling of anguish and remorse in the heart of the man before him.

“ Why, sir, you know it is very likely,” he said. “ People are committing suicides every day ; and this poor young lady was naturally driven into, what I may call, despair. She had lost her best and kindest friend in the morning. Before night, she was told that all the great property she had been led to expect, was not to be hers—that she was destitute, as I term it ; and then, either by words or deeds, she was driven out of the home which had been so long her own, where she had been

as merry as a bird, and had made every one happy round her. What so likely, when she walking along in a dark night, houseless, and homeless, and friendless, with perhaps not a guinea in her pocket, for she used to give away almost all she had in doing good, as that sorrow should be changed into despair, and despair into madness, as I term it, and that she should throw herself into the water, which I have often seen looking so calm and so peaceful, that one might well be tempted to take a plunge when any great sorrow was upon one."

The agony of Sir William Haldimand, while the man spoke, was quite apparent on his face. The muscles round the lips twitched ; the under jaw shook ; and drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead and glittered in the sun. Even Martyr, the blacksmith, perceived it ; and, giving the shopkeer a push, he said—

“ There, there ! don’t say any more. He can’t bear it.”

“ He will drive me mad !” exclaimed Sir William Haldimand. “ Let me hear no more of this. Take what means you can. Employ men, and horses, and all means in your power. I will pay all expenses. Let it be known generally that I will give a reward of a hundred guineas to any one who finds her—or—or the body.” As he spoke, a shudder passed over his whole frame, visible to the eyes of all. At the same time, he waved his hand for them to quit the room ; when, convinced by what they saw, that he knew even less than themselves of the fate of poor Kate, they withdrew one by one with a slow and melancholy step.

Issuing out by the front door upon the great terrace, they paused and consulted for a moment ; then moved on towards the avenue, paused again, consulted, and walked forward. Martyr, who had been one of the first in going, was behind most of the rest in coming back, talking eagerly with the little shopkeeper ; but, at length, a voice from the front exclaimed—

“ Hallo ! what is going on at the lodge ? Mother Gorson has got company. There’s Tom Notbeame’s gig and two or three horses !”

All raised their eyes in that direction and quickened their pace a little towards the lodge.

In the meantime, Sir William Halldimand sat where they left him, with his hands covering his eyes and the greater part of his face. Only three words escaped his lips ; but those he repeated more than once with a deep groan.

“ Mother and child !” he ejaculated.
“ Mother and child !”

That was all.

CHAPTER IV.

WE must now turn to follow Tom Not-beame on his expedition of the night before, and will do so as rapidly as the importance and gravity of the occasion allows.

We last left him setting out from the lodge, and taking his way to the abode of Mr. Martyr. There, however, he was disappointed ; for although Hush had called there, as the good old lady at the lodge had suspected, and although both Martyr himself and his wife thought he had a box with him, yet he did not leave it with them.

“ He wanted to lodge here,” said Martyr, “ and told us a long story about how badly

Sir William had used him ; but I do not know how it is, Tom, I can't get over it. I don't like him. That's the truth."

" You are quite right," said Tom Notbeame.

" He's been behaving very well lately, they tell me," continued the blacksmith ; " and his having quarrelled with Sir William is a good sign ; for he is a bad one, sure enough ; but still I'd rather not have him in my house ; and so I told him."

" Unlucky !" said Tom Notbeame. " I'll tell you what, Martyr ; I don't believe he's quarrelled with Sir William at all. I think it's all a sham ; and I'll bring it out. However I won't stay now ; for I'm going to Sir Harry Hillhouse, who is the nearest magistrate, I take it. I don't know that I shall make much of it just now ; for I've strange notions about that box he's got under his arm. It's in it, depend upon it."

With this very pellucid sentence, of

which neither Mr. Martyr nor his wife understood a word, Tom Notbeame terminated the conversation, got into his gig, and drove away. He was not a slow driver ; but still the hour was late when he arrived at the dwelling of Sir Harry Hillhouse.

Things took place in those days which we believe because we find them recorded upon good authority ; but it is with that sort of unsubstantial, unrealising belief with which we should read of the proceedings of a Mammoth or a Mastodon recorded by an eye-witness. “ After dinner ” were words of terrible import in those times. Seldom did a party break up, especially if it consisted entirely of men, without the greater part of the guests being absolutely drunk. Statesmen, even prime ministers, went into the houses of parliament, reeling ; and on many occasions, two or three clergymen found their way under the table, there to lie till they were drawn out by servants and put to bed.

A very different scene was presented by the dwelling of Sir Harry Hillhouse after dinner from any which we have had to describe at Haldistow Hall. The worthy magistrate, at the period of Tom Notbeame's visit, had entertained a party of his brethren of the bench ; and during the last two or three hours they had been busily engaged in imbibing large quantities of strong port, which left not one of them in a fit condition to act in his magisterial capacity. The servants laughed when their old friend Tom desired to see their master on business, and, giving him a broad intimation of the condition of the bench, told him he must come again in the morning.

Tom was resolved, however, not to quit the ground ; and he took up his lodging for the night with his friend, the coachman, at a small public-house in the neighbouring village. Early on the following day he was once more at Hillhouse Park ; and, after being kept some time to enable the baronet to clear his head from the still re-

maining fumes of wine, he was admitted. Tom was himself a sober man ; but he had a great reverence for drunkenness, as one of the vices of the aristocracy in his times ; and consequently he approached the magistrate with undiminished respect. His words were few, but sufficient to express his meaning ; and he made the magistrate very clearly comprehend that he was ready to swear, to the best of his belief, that the will of Sir John Haldimand had been purloined by one Matthew Hush, and that he had good cause to suppose it was concealed in the baggage of the said Matthew, part of which was at the lodge of Haldistow Park.

Now, although the powers of magistrates in regard to search-warrants have been greatly extended by some late enactments, such a statement as this would not be at all sufficient to obtain what Tom Notbeam wanted. But magistrates were in general then very much what many of them are now, a set of excellent, puzzle-

headed gentlemen, who rarely take the common-sense view of any question, and who employ any little knowledge of law they may possess for the purpose of rendering that which is obscure doubly dark ; many of them, indeed, are persons who seem appointed for the special purpose of letting the guilty escape and convicting the innocent.

Sir Harry Hillhouse was a well-intentioned man ; but he laboured under an impossibility of comprehending his own functions. Sometimes he was very timid in their exercise, at other times as bold as a lion ; and in the present instance he was very daring. He looked into Burns, turned over some half dozen leaves, looked at an old Act of Parliament or two, swore Tom Notbeame devoutly, and without asking—as all magistrates are now recommended to do—what were the grounds of his suspicion or belief, he granted the search warrant with very little hesitation.

When it was granted, however, a qualm

seized upon him. He took fright, not at the idea of the warrant, but at the thought of how it might be executed ; and, after some argumentation, pro and con, with Tom Notbeame, he determined to do what the French would call transport himself to the spot, and see the duty performed with his own eyes. He accordingly ordered the worthy landlord to wait for half an hour while he got some breakfast, and then set off for Haldistow, accompanied by his own servant and his own constable on horseback. Deeply did he cogitate as he went ; and the thought of Sir William Haldimand was somewhat awful to him. He was resolved to do his duty, such as he believed it to be ; but then, to soften matters a little with the baronet, he thought he might as well send up a civil message to request his presence while the goods and chattels of Master Hush were being examined. His servant was accordingly dispatched from the lodge to the hall, while he remained edifying Mr. and Mrs. Gorson with various

magisterial observations, and assuring them that no blame rested upon them, which they knew quite well before.

At length, however, his servant returned, bringing no very civil answer to his message. It was to the effect that Sir William Haldimand was busy, and could not be interrupted by him or any body else.

“ Oh, very well,” exclaimed the magistrate, in high dudgeon, “ I have done what was proper and polite ; and now I shall proceed as if there was no Sir William Haldimand in the world. Bring out the boxes, one by one ; and all present witness the examination. It shall be quite public.”

The unfortunate trunks and packages of Mr. Hush were accordingly produced ; and, after some trouble in getting into them, which only exasperated Sir Harry Hillhouse, the contents were thoroughly examined. Those contents are only to be described in the words under the last heads of an auctioneer’s catalogue : “ Vari-

ous" and "Sundries." But why should we dwell upon them ? It is impossible to tell whose were the suits produced from this box, whose the shirts extracted from that ; whence came this embroidery and lace, to what pocket that snuff-box originally belonged, whose were the silver spoons and the punch ladle, or to what nose ought properly to be applied that richly chased gold vinaigrette. All these things are buried in oblivion ; and, though the enquiry might have been serviceable to many at the time, it would be fruitless now. Suffice it, for our purposes, that the will of Sir John Haldimand was not found, nor any other paper of any kind which would bear ink.

Sir Harry Hillhouse began to be under some alarm. Upon very insufficient information, he had caused the boxes of Mr. Hush to be broken open, and turned out his miscellaneous property, without finding anything to justify such a proceeding. He apprehended that this event might not be

without its results. He saw that a great number of persons were present, the congregation having been increased by the party from Haldistow ; and he turned sharply to Tom Notbeame, demanding,

“ Well, sir, well, you see. What do you say now ?”

Tom had been standing by, watching the whole transaction with the most imperturbable gravity ; and all he replied was—

“ It’s not there.”

“ Then how dare you, sir, bring me here to open these boxes, and search, without being sure that something will be found in them to inculpate the man you accuse ?”

“ Well, what do you call this ?” said Tom Notbeame, taking out of the concave top of one of the trunks a parcel wrapped up in a skin of washed leather which had been put aside as evidently containing hardware, but out of which peeped a round iron ring.

The magistrate turned his eyes in that

direction, while Tom unfolded the washed leather and drew forth a bunch of skeleton-keys and pick-locks of various sorts and sizes.

“ Ha, ha !” cried Martyr, the blacksmith, who well knew what they meant ; though Sir Harry Hillhouse, unable to deal with more than one idea at a time, demanded still in an angry tone—

“ But where is the will ?”

“ That I don’t know,” answered Tom Notbeame ; “ but these are the things he got it with. I told you I saw him fumbling at the lock of the chest. Depend on it he was trying these upon it.”

“ Ha !” said Sir Harry, as a new light broke upon him. “ That is important, to be sure.”

He remained a few minutes in consideration, and then said—

“ Well, I will have these things locked up till I can consult my brother magistrates. But still the will is wanting.”

“ That’s true, your worship,” replied Tom

Notbeame ; “ but he has got one box away with him ; and, if it is not burnt, it’s in that, depend upon it. I’ll find him out, howsoever, and have it out of him one way or another. Here’s Martyr can prove he took away a box.”

“ Ay, that he did,” said the blacksmith. “ He had something under his arm when he was at my house ; and I’m sure it was a box. But now Sir Harry is here, we had better talk to him about poor Miss Kate, and what has become of her. Perhaps he can tell us what to do.”

This brought about a long explanation, which, as the reader knows all the circumstances, need not be inflicted upon him. The statement was made to Sir Harry Hillhouse ; but the person most deeply interested in it was Tom Notbeame. He showed his emotions, however, in an unusual way—by not saying a single word, and walking out of the lodge as soon as he had heard all. The coachman followed him and caught hold of his arm, less to

detain him than to bring his ear close to his own lips ; and, whatever it was he whispered, it seemed to interest his companion greatly. Without making any reply, however, he got into the gig, and, still accompanied by the coachman, drove off to his own dwelling. When Sir Henry Hillhouse turned round to look for him, he was already gone, and a couple of hundred yards down the road.

CHAPTER V.

To a different spot, and to a different character, from any of those with which the reader has been made acquainted in the preceding pages, I must now lead him. He is not to suppose, however, that the personage about to be presented to him, is introduced merely for the nonce in the beginning of the third volume. To do so, indeed, I will contend would be perfectly justifiable ; for nature does it : she often introduces suddenly a character for the nonce, as it were, who plays, for a very brief time, a prominent part, and then disappears from all connection with those in whose com-

pany he has been acting. But such, nevertheless, is not the case here ; for the person of whom I speak, although never seen, has been alluded to before.

In an out-of-the-way part of the country, about four miles from Haldistow, lying in an angle of that great wide common, so frequently spoken of before, which shut it out on three sides from all other cultivated ground, lay a small farm, about the centre of which, not far from a lane or parish road which traversed it, was a small house with a very tolerable homesteading. Barns and sheds, and carthouses and stables, were there in plenty—ay, and one or two ricks of very tolerable size, bespeaking that the owner was well to do. The farm, it is true, consisted only of a hundred and forty acres ; and a part of the land—that which bordered on the common—was not very fertile ; but in the little valley below, where a small stream meandered in its way to the larger one often noticed, the soil was rich and and prolific in the extreme;

and it was well cultivated, too, according to the knowledge of that day.

The house was somewhat like that which a child makes out of a cat's head. It had chimneys on either side, a door in the middle, and a window to the right and left of the door. There were several rooms above ; and the lower part of the house was apportioned between parlour, kitchen, and various offices serving in the affairs of the farm.

In the parlour on the evening succeeding the death of Sir John Haldimand, was seated a man of about fifty years of age, with a jug, a bottle, and a glass of rum-and-water before him, diligently smoking his pipe and sipping the beverage which he had just brewed. He was a tall, powerful man, dressed in a good blue coat, cord breeches, and boots pushed down from the knees, like those which may be seen in French prints of about the time of the first great revolution, when certain beaux of Paris thought fit to affect the English

jockey, or, as they pronounced it, Jocquai. His complexion was originally dark, and was now florid ; the hair of that jet black which is seen more frequently on the continent than in England, smooth and shining as if it had been varnished. His features were high, thin, and hawklike, with small, but exceedingly keen and piercing, black eyes. The eyes were somewhat near together, too, and somewhat sunk in the head. The teeth were fine and white, and the jaw firm and large.

He was an unpleasant looking fellow, notwithstanding. There was an expression of cunning, keenness, and remorselessness about his face, which was very legible, although the features in themselves might be considered good.

As he sat there with his pipe in his mouth, and the glass before him, his eyes were half closed ; but he was not asleep nor sleepy. He was evidently meditating profoundly on some subject ; and, in truth, he was a man of thought as well as action.

This personage was the old friend mentioned by Mr. Matthew Hush in one of his letters to Sir William Haldimand, who had been obliging enough to lend a horse and a son to carry the epistle over to Dingle. In fact, many years previously, farmer Bagshot, as he was now called, then better known as sharp Bill Bagshot, was a great friend and crony of worthy Mr. Hush. He was some two or three years older than Matthew, and had been his instructor in various branches of science. He had aided him to practise what he taught, and, like other masters with apprentices, had naturally appropriated the greater part of his disciple's earnings—at least, so thought Matthew Hush. If a deer was stolen, and had to be divided, Bill Bagshot took the hind quarters of the animal for sale, and gave the two fore quarters to Matthew, besides appropriating the hide to his own purposes. If a quantity of game was swept up in the night, the pheasants and hares fell to Bagshot's share, while the

rabbits and partridges were appropriated by Hush. It is probable, that the same mode of division took place in other speculations which we cannot so well particularise ; but in these transactions the matter was certain.

Since those days, however, Bill Bagshot was an altered man. He and Hush had both prospered, though in very different ways. While Hush, patronised by Mr. William Haldimand for the electioneering services of his father, quitted the scene of his early achievements, and rose from foot-boy to the dignity of butler and valet in one even and unceasing course of united roguery and success, Bill Bagshot had had his reverses. His father turned him out of doors ; his relations would take no notice of him ; gamekeepers and park-keepers laid traps for him ; the officers of the revenue watched him closely ; but he weathered the storm stoutly and skilfully for two winters. At length, however, one of those fearful scourges of rogues and

vagabonds, Bow-street officers, was brought down to Dingle upon some evils of a more serious kind sustained by persons in the neighbourhood ; and all suspicions turned upon Bill Bagshot as one of the persons most likely to profit by other people's losses. Whether this opinion was just or not—and he always contended to the last day of his life that he had nothing on earth to do with the transactions in question—Bill Bagshot judged it expedient to relieve the neighbourhood, visited by the Bow-street officer, of his presence, and to do so in a manner which rendered pursuit improbable.

In those days, many careers were open to an adventurous youth—I wish it was so at present. The East Indies were delightful and productive ; for pagoda-trees then grew in many gardens ; but interest was required in that quarter ; and Bill Bagshot was not a rogue of influence. America had just worked out her own independence ; and Bagshot was fond of a great

deal of liberty. After short consideration, therefore, he packed up all his moveable goods and chattels—they went into a small space, though some of them were valuable—and, with his bundle on his shoulder, took a circuitous route to a seaport, where he got a passage in a vessel for the United States upon the condition of paying some part and working out the rest of his passage-money. The skipper always vowed that he cheated him out of three dollars ; and the ship's cook grumbled much at having lost an apron and three pairs of stockings.

Bill Bagshot, however, was landed safely at Boston. Of all the sharp tools which America has imported from England, never was there one with a finer edge than that which she now received. Unfortunately, his career is now lost to history for several years. There were fine opportunities, undoubtedly, for a man of Mr. Bagshot's peculiar genius ; and it would seem that he improved them ; for

he got together some money, and became very careful as well as acquisitive. It is said that he passed some time as far west as he could well go ; but whether he hunted deer or Indians has never been clearly ascertained. Certain it is that he was by nature a beast of prey, a hunting animal ; and doubtless he enjoyed himself very much. After a while, the Southern states seemed to please him more ; and it was rumoured that he left not altogether a pleasant reputation in the North and West. However, in Carolina, he did very well, became rather mercantile in his pursuits, and dabbled a little in slaves. In all very free countries, the slave-trade has been a profitable speculation : all anomalies may be rendered profitable by those who know how to work them. Here he made a little more money, and kept it ; and, having been absent some ten or twelve years without any communication with his family, he thought fit, as a dutiful son, to write to his beloved father, and give

him intelligence of his prosperity. There might be a little spice of triumph in announcing his success in life ; and it is to be remarked that his letter contained frequent repetitions of such expressions as “ my house,” “ my slaves,” “ my horses.”

If he did intend to rebuke his parent for discarding him, by showing that he could do very well without help, he missed his aim. A letter arrived for him some four months after, addressed in a good round hand to William Bagshot, Esq. ; and, on opening it, he found a communication from a lawyer, telling him that his father had been dead for five years, that his letter had been opened by his mother, that his uncle John was just dead without a will, and that he, William Bagshot, was undoubtedly heir to the estate of Harble Farm, an old freehold possession of the family. This was the very solicitor who had brought down the Bow-street officer and set him upon the track of Bill Bagshot ; but he now in sweet and courteous phrase

begged for Mr. Bagshot's instructions as to taking possession of the property in his behoof.

Bill Bagshot sent him no instructions, but sold off his slaves, of which he had five upon hand—one an elderly man with a single eye, and one a little girl of seven—his horses, one of which Don Quixote, might have mounted and the other have served Sancho in place of Dapple, for it was not bigger than a Spanish ass—and all his goods and chattles; and, with a capital of some two thousand dollars, set off to take possession of his estate in England. He brought over a certain set of American notions with him, and not the best class of American notions either. With these, a comfortable capital, and a farm for which he had no rent to pay, he sat himself down where we have found him, and began a new score on the tally-board of life.

Of course it made a great difference in men's estimation of his character, that he was prosperous instead of unfortunate.

It may be considered as an invariable axiom, that, although good men are not always prosperous, prosperous men are always good—at least in the estimation of nine hundred and ninety nine men out of every thousand in the world. People deal mildly even with recorded crimes in the case of the prosperous ; and the good folks of Dingle and Halcombe and all the neighbourhood said sweetly, in speaking of Mr. Bagshot, that he had sown his wild oats, and would doubtless be a very different man now. One of his first acts, indeed, tended to conciliate esteem. There are white spots in the devil ; and, though by this time he was avaricious as well as greedy, he took care of his old mother. He had no principle upon earth ; but nature has principles which often supply the place of those we want. He married, too, a stout, ill-favoured, pock-marked girl with a large nose, who had a thousand pounds at her command. He was not reported to be the best of husbands ; but

she was soon relieved from a somewhat hard and unpleasant life by death. She left one boy, whom his father diligently brought up in the way he should go.

As to his dealings with his neighbours, Farmer Bagshot was soon found to have lost none of his keenness. The edge had not been blunted in the United States ; far from it. He would make a good bargain wherever he could, and never asked himself whether it was an honest one or not. He kept diligently out of the fangs of the law ; he gave no one an opportunity of prosecuting him ; but many a one, after dealing with Farmer Bagshot, was heard to say, “It’s the next thing to swindling.”

He cared nothing about that, provided it *was* the next thing. He was obliging, too, when he was paid for it. Though a rich man, there was nothing that he would not himself do, or make his son do, for money. His carts and horses were always to spare when any one would give more for their use than they could gain upon the

farm ; and he would sell anything or everything that anybody wanted, for a little more than its worth. He did it all too with a dogged air of indifference, which he had probably acquired in the West, giving people to understand, even when he was driving a very hard bargain with them, that he did not care about it, and was doing them a favour rather than otherwise.

On Mr. Hush's return to Haldistow, he took an opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with Farmer Bagshot. They would hardly have known each other if they had met in the streets ; and the latter, at first, looked somewhat coldly upon Mr. Hush, of whose history, since they parted, he was ignorant. When he found, however, that his old companion was a prosperous man as well as himself, that he wanted nothing, was shrewd, keen, and unscrupulous, his society became exceedingly desirable in the eyes of Farmer Bagshot. They met together often, re-

newed all their old intimacy, and, when the boy was out of the room, talked and laughed and joked over old exploits, which were quite forgotten in the presence of all other persons. Thus it was that Farmer Bagshot was of much assistance to Mr. Hush in his manœuvres, to convey intelligence secretly to Mr. William Haldimand.

They had a certain distrust of each other, indeed, which could not be altogether overcome. They knew each other *too* well ; and, therefore, when Mr. Hush was apparently expelled from Haldistow, he judged it better to go down to his aunt Mrs. Martyr's house, than to that of his friend, Mr. Bagshot. Martyr, however, soon settled the question by refusing to receive him at all ; and the excellent Matthew, with his leather box under his arm, set off for Harble farm, prepared to pay for his board and lodging, knowing that that was the only means of obtaining either.

It had not long been dark on the evening of Hush's dismissal when Farmer Bagshot

sat in his parlour smoking his pipe, and sipping his rum-and-water. A good deal of information had reached him from Haldistow ; he knew of Sir John's death, of the arrival of Sir William Haldimand, of the will not being discovered ; and on these points he sat and mused with the most perfect estimation of the genius, character, and probable objects of his worthy friend Mr. Hush.

“ Mat has had a hand in this,” said the excellent farmer to himself. “ Never tell me the old gentleman didn’t make a will when he’d got a young ooman to provide for. The brother wasn’t hanging about Dingle for nothing either. They’ve been up to a knowing trick, I take it ; and Mat’s been well paid, no doubt. He’s learnt a precious sight since I first knew him, and could cut sticks with any man, I should think. He’s a fool if he hasn’t taken care of himself.”

“ Do you know what, father ?” said his hopeful son and heir, entering the room

somewhat abruptly. "They say the new Barnit has turned out all Sir John's old servants."

"No, Bill, I didn't know it," answered his father. "He's quite wise. Old servants and new masters never agree."

"Ay, and Mr. Hush and all," said the boy.

"That's funny," said Farmer Bagshot. But he added, internally, "They're deep ones." Then, raising his voice, he demanded, "Where have you been so long, Bill, you little devil?"

"I've been strewing the raisins along from the great copse to our rows," said the boy, "and setting the sringes for the pheasants."

"Why, you fool, it isn't October yet," said his father.

"It soon will be; and they'll keep," replied the boy.

"Ay, but listen a bit, Bill," said the famer. "There's barley and peas on the cold ground."

“They like raisins better,” answered Bill the younger; “and we shall get some, if we don’t get all. The others can come after.”

The father laughed aloud at what he thought wit in his son, made him drink some of the rum-and-water, and then sent him about his business. He had hardly taken four whiffs after this conversation when the bell rang; and Mr. Bagshot, drawing the pipe from his mouth, muttered—

“That’s Mat, for a guinea. I’m glad of it. One may screw something out of him, perhaps.”

He did not condescend to explain the exact nature of what he proposed to screw out of his friend; and with him it might be very doubtful whether it was money or information—perhaps both; but the next moment, as he expected, Mr. Hush was ushered into the room by his hopeful son, and was welcomed by a hearty shake of the hand. The boy remained to hear

what was going to take place ; for he had a great fund of curiosity in him ; but Hush immediately proceeded to business, wishing at that late hour to settle his quarters as soon as possible.

“ I want to know, Mr. Bagshot,” he said, “ if you can give me accommodation here for a day or two, just for old friendship ? ”

Farmer Bagshot laughed.

“ Nobody ever does anything for old friendship, Hush,” he replied. “ I have a room up-stairs which I let, when I can get anybody to take it. That’s not often. So you’re a god-send. It’s a guinea a-week. Don’t let it under a week.” He always came to the point where money was concerned—ay, and stuck to it too.

“ A guinea a-week ! ” cried Hush, although he was quite ready to give it ; but he thought it better not to yield too readily.

Poo, poo, Bagshot ! You can never expect to get a guinea a-week for a single room.”

“ Do indeed,” said, the farmer. “ I have got it once, and can’t let it under.

'Twould be a bad precedent, as they used to say t'other side of the water. Very happy to 'commode you, Mat, but must stick to the principle."

Matthew Hush wrangled a little about the price, and also in regard to what he was to pay for his board ; but the matter was at length settled ; and the boy lighted a candle and conducted him up to his room to deposit his black leather case. After having done so, and gazed about him for a minute or two, with the pertinacious boy still sticking at his heels, Hush descended to the parlour again, to have some supper and a chat with his host. For his part, he meditated nothing but light and agreeable conversation ; but Farmer Bagshot, with a peculiar skill of his own, contrived to lead it to more important things, which must not be discussed at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

NOTHING is so inconvenient to two men who wish to talk together, as a hobble-de-hoy; and in the present case, Bill Bagshot's son stuck fast to the parlour. He would take no hint, though his father gave several that were pretty broad; and at length, well knowing that, when supper was talked of, there was no chance of getting the young gentleman to bed, Farmer Bagshot sent him across the common to fetch another bottle of rum, though there was one in the locker under the window.

“ Well, Bill,” said Mr. Hush, when the boy was gone, “ you've heard of the piece

of business at the Hall, and how Sir William has turned us all out."

"Ay, ay, I've heard all about it," answered Farmer Bagshot. "It's a mighty good story, Mat, and well acted, I dare say."

"I don't know what you mean, Bagshot," said Mr. Hush. "It's quite true, I can tell you. He turned us all out, and me at the head of the rest, in such a hurry that I was forced to leave all my boxes, except the little one at the lodge."

"Oh, I can easily send over the cart and have them brought to-morrow," said the farmer. But upon this Hush put a decided negative, saying that it was not worth while, as he should not stay long. In truth, he was not at all sure as to what sort of examination his goods and chattels might be subjected, if they happened to rest on Farmer Bagshot's premises, while he was absent for an hour or two.

"Ah," answered Farmer Bagshot, with

a knowing look, “ I dare say it won’t be long before you’re in his service again.”

“ There you’re quite wrong, Bill,” said Mr. Hush, who began to see, with not a very pleasant sensation, that his worthy comrade of former days entertained suspicions. “ I shall never go into his service again ; for, I tell you, he has turned me out, and behaved very ill to me.”

“ Why, you’ve never been fool enough to burn the will or give it up to him ?” said Farmer Bagshot, in a tone of surprise ; “ and if you havn’t, he *must* take you.”

“ I don’t know what you mean about the will,” replied Mr. Hush ; “ but I know I wouldn’t go back to him if he wanted me. The truth is, Bill,” he added, in an easy tone, “ I have scraped together a little money in all the many years I have been in service ; and I intend to set up an inn somewhere.”

“ It’s a good trade,” said Farmer Bagshot, thoughtfully. “ I’ve known many a

man, who knows how to manage, make a great deal of money in that way; but you see," he continued, sticking to his point, "you could do a deal better if you had the will in your hands."

"I don't know at all what you mean about the will," answered Mr. Hush, rather sharply. "What have I to do with the will? lost, they say; but it never was in my keeping. I wish you'd speak out, Bill, what you mean."

"What's the use of speaking out between you and me, Mat?" asked the farmer, with a grin. "We understand at half a wink, my boy. I say, if you had but the will in your own paws, you might work the old gentleman like a copper mine. I knew of a valet once who grew quite a man of fortune, and kept a livery servant himself, and a carriage, just by having bagged some love-letters between his master and another man's wife. Didn't he manage the screw well?"

Mathew Hush meditated profoundly; but, at length, he said—

“ Hardly fair, I think, Bill.”

“ Fair ! a fiddlestick !” answered Bagshot, with a look of vast contempt. “ What are masters but men’s natural enemies ? There should be no such thing as masters in the world. All men are equal ; and, if a country will have such things as masters in it, why, it’s the servants’ business to get as much out of their masters as they can, to make up for the tyranny they are forced to endure.”

“ There’s some truth in that,” said Matthew Hush, who, as the reader knows, had his own peculiar views, practical and theoretical, in regard to the relations between master and servant ; “ but it depends upon circumstances, Bill. As to William Haldimand, I should not mind screwing him down till he were as flat as a pancake ; for, as to talking of gratitude towards him, it’s all stuff ; he laughs at it himself. He never did anything for me but to serve himself. Indeed there have been only two people in the whole

world that ever were kind to me, really and truly. It doesn't matter. It may be nonsense or no nonsense ; but I would have gone through fire and water to serve them. They are both angels in Heaven now, if there is such a place ; and this William Haldimand helped to send them there. I never did a wrong thing while my poor mistress lived, and was getting on very well ; but he worried her to death ; and I hated him from that minute."

" Then how could you be such a fool as to burn the will ?" demanded the farmer, still returning to his point.

" I did not burn the will, you fool," rejoined Matthew Hush ; and he was just going to asseverate that he knew nothing of it, when he thought he might as well leave the sentence as it was, and hear what his companion had to say upon the subject.

" Well, that's something like, now," said farmer Bagshot. " Come, come, Mat, don't pull a face. I know you well enough to

guess pretty sharply what you've been about. I was sure when you first popped up in Haldistow, and got so quietly into old Sir John's service, that you didn't come down for nothing ; and then, when I found you were writing backwards and forwards to Mr. Haldimand whenever Sir John was ill, I knew I was on the right track. Now, you see, the will has disappeared ; and that shows me what it is. So just let us suppose now, only for the sake of supposing, that you've got the will snug somewhere or another."

"Suppose anything you like," replied Matthew Hush. "What would you do then, Bill ?"

"That depends," replied the farmer, with a sage look. "Have you got everything out of him that he promised you ?"

"I've got my wages," answered Hush.

"Ay, ay ; but I mean the other matter, the trifle over and above," replied the farmer.

Matthew Hush shook his head, saying—

“I’ve got nothing but my wages.”

“You were right to get that first,” said Bagshot, sententiously ; “and now you should make him give you all sorts of certificates of good character. Pretend you’re going to travel for the good of your health, and for his convenience, and want to settle your affairs. He’ll give you all you like upon that condition ; and you must have certificates, for fear, when you worry him about the will afterwards, he should trump up some story against you.”

“That’s a good idea,” thought Hush. But the other continued.

“When you’ve got all that, you can find it inconvenient to set out so soon ; and if he speaks angrily about it, you can give him a gentle hint that the will is not so far off but it may be found yet ; and then you can need a pound or two more, and so on. It ought to be a good four hundred a-year to you, that will, if you work it properly.”

To say the truth, during the last six or eight months of Mr. Hush’s life, plans, purposes, and notions, such as Mr. Bagshot had just

been suggesting, had been busily evolving themselves in the brain of Matthew Hush ; but yet there are few men so confident in their own roguery as not to like being cheered on by precept and example upon the path of virtue. Mr. Bagshot's discourse was, consequently, very comforting and supporting to our good friend Hush ; and he felt really obliged to Sir John Haldimand for dying so suddenly as to afford Mr. William Haldimand neither time nor opportunity to take his precautions and ascertain that the will was really destroyed. He encouraged the conversation, which deviated into a general discussion of such practices as were under consideration ; and farmer Bagshot, who had a very extensive knowledge of the world and a propensity for anecdote, told a great many amusing and instructive stories of proceedings very similar to those which he now advised.

It was wonderful, according to his account, what a prolific harvest is reaped every year by those who know how to

take advantage of a favourable situation, from the crimes, vices, and weaknesses of others. A murder had been the means of fortune to one man, without his having anything to do with the actual deed. A forgery had been a mine of gold to another, who had never forged a line in his life. All sorts of intrigues had furnished food to the hungry, and clothing to the scantily apparelled. The plan of putting men's fears under contribution, seemed to have been thoroughly considered and digested by worthy Bill Bagshot, at a time when he was driven to look out for resources of any kind. It is probable, indeed, that he had then collected all the information upon the subject that was to be obtained, but had not been able to meet with any large and comfortable crime from which he could extract hush-money. Otherwise we should have found him mounting Fortune's ladder by other means than an uncle's death intestate.

Mr. Hush was highly edified, and obliged

to acknowledge to himself that Bill Bagshot was still his master ; but, when their conversation had gone on for nearly three quarters of an hour, the hopeful scion of the house of Bagshot returned to the paternal roof, bearing a bottle of rum and a face of wonder.

“Lord, father, what do you think I’ve seen ?” said he.

“I don’t know, my boy,” replied farmer Bagshot. “Not a mare’s nest, I suppose ?”

“No, no,” answered the boy ; “but, after getting the rum, I thought I’d just run up by the road and see if I could pick up anything—news or anything, like. It’s not two minutes longer that way ; and who should I see, when I was nearly up at Haldistow, but the young lady of the Hall, walking all alone on the road down to Tom Notbeame’s.”

“Poo, nonsense !” exclaimed Matthew Hush and Farmer Bagshot, at once ; and the latter added, “You must be mistaken,

Bill. Miss Haldimand would never be out alone at such an hour of the night."

"Not mistaken at all," answered the boy sturdily. "The moon was just coming over the bank; and both she and I looked under her bonnet. Don't you think I know Miss Haldimand when I see her?"

"He's turned her out, for a hundred guineas!" exclaimed Matthew Hush, flying away from his first opinion. "How he does hate her!"

"Ay," answered farmer Bagshot, with a knowing nod of the head, "a man always hates anybody that has kept him in fear a long while; and sometimes the hate gets the better of the fear. So that it is a nice point to keep things equal, to get as much as one can out of a man, and yet not drive him too hard. I knew a fellow once who whipped his donkey—his dupe, I mean—till he cut his throat. That's what I call killing the goose with the golden eggs."

"This is too bad, though," said Matthew

Hush, whose mind had been going on with a different train of ideas. "He had no right to turn her out at night in that way, before Mr. Richard came back, or some one to take care of her."

He paused and thought for an instant, and then added, in a musing way,

"Perhaps we might get something out of this—I should like to see more of it. I'll go across—I wish you'd just come with me, Bill; and we'll talk about it by the way."

"With all my heart," replied the farmer. "You stay here, boy, and take care of the house. Mind you don't meddle with the rum." And getting his hat, he walked out with Matthew Hush, who took his way across the well-known fields towards the long, narrow strip of heath which separated Harble Farm from the road by the side of the Mere.

CHAPTER VII.

LORD and Lady Martindale sat at luncheon together two days after Sir John Haldimand's death. Both of them wore some slight signs of mourning, although it was not on account of that gentleman's decease; for as yet they were not acquainted with the fact. Lady Martindale was calm, composed, and cheerful. She looked as if the relation she had lost had left her a fortune, and satisfaction was in the heart while mourning was without. Lord Martindale, on the contrary, seemed uneasy, or, to use a homely but very expressive term, he was fidgetty—at least as much so as a man of his rank and station ever permitted

himself to be; for, in those days, as in the present, it was considered good *ton* to seem indifferent to everything on the face of the earth—not to hold the feelings and the passions in due subjection, but to affect to have none.

“Is it not strange, my dear mother,” he said at length, “that Alice has not arrived? She was to be here at eleven; and now it is past two.”

“Young ladies don’t always get up when they intend to do so, Martindale,” replied the lady in a careless tone. “Alice has either overslept herself, or been smitten with the treasures of some shop, and stopped to ransack them.”

“She cannot have overslept herself three hours,” replied Lord Martindale; “and as to a shop, if Dingle possesses such a thing, it is more than is apparent.”

“A lame horse, a slow post-boy, a broken strap,” replied his mother—“you have not calculated all these things, Martindale. Alice is safe and sound, depend upon it. She was born under a lucky star.”

Lord Martindale made no reply ; but he thought that to lose her father and mother at a very early age, to be left, with a very moderate fortune, to the care of people who were at the time nearly strangers to her, and then, as soon as she went to pay a long-promised visit to a relation who really loved her devotedly, to see that affectionate heart crushed by a protracted sickness, were not exactly proofs of being born under a lucky star, although she might perhaps have an increase of fortune by the death of one who loved her. He knew his mother's cool way of taking all things, however, too well to make any comment. There have been people who have loved money more and less wisely than Lady Martindale ; for she would not have done what she considered a wicked thing to obtain it in cart-loads ; but still it was undoubtedly, in her estimation, the great good of human life, the possession of which might well compensate for any transient griefs and disappointments. The loss of a friend, she argued, was soon got over, while the money left

to one remained ; and, as she never could conceive how people could view the matter in any other light, she looked upon all expression of feeling on such an occasion as affectation, decent or indecent according to its intensity. She was very glad to see, however, her son's anxiety about his cousin ; for her views had been very much changed of late ; and she did all she could to increase that anxiety by contrasting it strongly with her own indifference.

Going on with her luncheon, therefore, she talked of all sorts of things, the most repugnant to Lord Martindale's mind at the moment ; discussed the incompetency of a new cook who did not suit her at all, even noticed Mr. Fatside's last sermon, and then, rising, sauntered to the window for a moment, saying, in the easiest possible tone, "I should not wonder if Alice did not come to-day. It is strange, how lonely we have all seemed to feel without her."

Lord Martindale did not think it strange

at all, though he had felt the loneliness his mother spoke of ten times more than she had done. Alice had been first his plaything, and then his companion for many years. The house had never been without her as long as he could remember ; and it seemed not like the same place when she was away. Whenever he wanted it, while she was there, he had somebody to talk to, somebody to consult with, somebody who could enter into his views and feelings, which his mother, with all her influence over him, could not do at all. In short, he had never known how necessary Alice Richmond was to his happiness till she was gone. Then, however, he began to miss her sadly, and to draw contrasts between her character and that of his mother not very favourable to the latter. Every day some little trait of kindness, of gentleness, of generosity, came back to his memory. Her looks, her tones, were remembered ; and graces of person and of mind, which had been unnoticed when daily before his eyes,

now rose up out of the past amongst the fairest visions of memory. For three months, the period of her proposed visit to her aunt, he bore the separation with fortitude ; but when, at the end of that time, came a letter from Alice herself to say that Lady Gerrard had fallen into a bad state of health, and she must protract her stay for another month, Lord Martindale became impatient. He set out for London to amuse himself ; but he paid a visit at Lady Gerrard's by the way, to inquire courteously after her health and to see his fair cousin. The couple of hours he passed with her did him more harm than all his stay in London did him good ; and he felt half inclined, before he left her, to put his arms round her, and say, “ Alice, will you be my little wife again ? ” without consulting his mother on the subject at all. He refrained, however ; and month after month had subsequently passed without his seeing Alice at all. Lady Gerrard continued daily growing worse till at length death terminated her sufferings ;

and Alice, after having remained till the funeral was over and a good deal of law business settled by the executors, was now returning to her former home where very different feelings from those which she had ever met with before were now prepared to receive her.

Under these circumstances Lady Martindale's coolness absolutely provoked her son.

“Not return to day, my dear mother!” he exclaimed. “She will, depend upon it, unless some accident has happened to her. Alice is the least capricious of human beings, and one of the most considerate. She would not willingly change her mind, and, if obliged to delay, would send and let us know.—I am not half easy at this delay; and I have a great mind to ride out on the road and see what has become of her.”

Lady Martindale made no reply for a moment or two; and her son was just rising, to set out as he had said, when she exclaimed, with a slight smile which she

took care he should not see, “Here she comes !”

Lord Martindale moved to the window, and certainly saw a carriage with post-horses, driving up the long line of road.

“It may not be Alice, after all,” he said. “Here comes a carriage, true ; but Alice may not be in it.”

“But I know the chariot, Martindale,” said his mother, almost pettishly, “and so ought you too, for you lent it to her to go.”

“I believe it is,” said Lord Martindale, after having gazed for half a minute longer ; and without more ado, he quitted the room and went down to the hall-door.

“What eager fools these young men are!” thought Lady Martindale. “I wonder if his father was ever so anxious about my coming ?”

We could have answered the question. He was once ; but she soon cured him.

In the meantime, Lord Martindale went out without his hat, and stood upon the

broad stone steps till the carriage drove up. He waved his hand gladly as it came near, but almost started at seeing Alice in deep mourning. He had never seen her in mourning since she was a child, and it made a very great difference in her appearance ; not that it took anything from her beauty, rather the contrary : but it made her look more womanly ; and the effect was not at all a disadvantage.

“ How kind of you to come out, Martindale ! ” said Alice, as he handed her into the house. “ I have been looking out of the window for every glance of the Abbey for the last quarter of an hour.”

“ But you’re so long behind your time, Alice,” said Lord Martindale. “ I was beginning to get quite uneasy, and was going to ride out to see what had become of you.”

Alice looked up in his face with a grave, enquiring glance, and then dropped her eyes again, saying—

“ I was detained an hour or two, hearing

some sad news, which perhaps has not reached you yet. Poor Sir John Haldimand is dead, and Mr. William Haldimand, his brother, has taken possession of Haldistow Hall at once, and turned out all the old servants. The whole country is ringing with it."

This subject served them for conversation till they reached the drawing-room, whither Lady Martindale had by this time retreated. She received her niece with every demonstration of kindness and affection, and kissed her warmly ; but two of her first sentences were very characteristic of the person.

"How well you look, Alice !" she exclaimed—"I never saw you look so beautiful ; and, after all you have had to go through, it is wonderful."

The next instant, however, she added—

"My dear girl, you really should not have let them make your dress that way. Those large folds have been antiquated these three years."

Alice smiled faintly, and replied—

“ You must remember how far I was from London, my dear aunt ; and the poor people did their best.”

Lord Martindale turned upon his heel and walked into one of the windows, out of all patience with his mother’s comments, and wishing her heartily out of the room.

Lady Martindale took care not to go, however, talking with her niece about the relation she had lost, with some exceedingly commonplace comments upon the uncertainty of human life, the ordinary lot of mortality, the necessity of bearing the will of Heaven with resignation, and other etceteras. She then enquired minutely into the amount of the property which Lady Gerrard had bequeathed to her niece, and rejoiced to find that it amounted to several thousands per annum.

Her satisfaction was rather too apparent. It pained Alice, and made Lord Martindale angry ; and, as his mother had forgotten to offer his cousin any luncheon, he rang

the bell and ordered it, in the hope that, when Alice went to the dining-room, Lady Martindale would remain where she was. He was mistaken, however. Her ladyship, having a great notion that a mistake has been made in natural history, and that man ought properly to be classed with pigs rather than monkeys, often practised the well known trick of pulling people back when she wanted them to go forward ; and she kept close to Alice's side till she retired to her own room. She was ready to receive her, too, when she came down ; and the day passed without affording one minute for private conversation between the two cousins.

Lord Martindale, however, had every opportunity of seeing that Alice was a good deal changed, a good deal improved both in mind and personal appearance. The beauty of the young girl had developed itself into the beauty of the young woman ; and with it had come a quiet grace and easy dignity of carriage which

was very engaging in his eyes. Since she had left the Abbey, Alice had received an education of the heart as well as of the understanding. New feelings, new circumstances, new trains of thought, the necessity of acting and judging for herself on many occasions, even long anxiety and deep grief had all given lessons to the affections and strengthened and expanded the mind. Without having lost a particle of her simple truth and gentle candour, Alice Richmond had acquired more knowledge of life, and strength with knowledge. Alice Richmond now could venture to rely upon Alice Richmond ; for she had been tried, and was found stronger than had been supposed. All this set Lord Martindale musing ; and, at first, the dream was a pleasant one ; but suddenly a thought crossed his imagination ; and he asked himself—

“ How can I tell whom she may have met with during her long absence—who

may have had the opportunity and the power to raise up new affections in her heart?"

The thought was very painful ; and he teased himself with it a good deal. He reassured himself, in some degree, however, by calling to mind the early and long subsisting attachment between himself and his fair cousin.

Like all men of quick imagination, where such feelings are concerned, he fretted himself a good deal with the pros and cons, and ended by saying to himself—

" Well, I will be satisfied on this point before long."

Let it be remarked, he did not say, " I will offer my hand to Alice ;" for he had no distinct notion of when, where, or how he would do so, although he thought it very probable that such would be the result. He was not a man to commit a premeditated, cold-blooded declaration. Few men ever do. It is as awful as murder ; but he, like the rest, was prepared to

begin gently and timidly, and then rush to the extreme length before he knew anything about it.

The whole party separated for the night without another word passing between Alice and himself which his mother did not hear ; and Lord Martindale laid down his head upon his pillow with the determination of rising early the next morning.

“ Alice was always an early riser,” he said ; “ and it was quite a pleasure to see her as I lolled out of my dressing-room window, with the bright morning sunshine sporting with her beautiful hair as she walked up and down upon the terrace. I wonder I never before found out how lovely she is.”

Strange to say, Lord Martindale kept his determination, and was up and in the drawing-room full half an hour before Alice appeared. When she entered with her light step, he advanced with a beaming face to meet her ; and, still keeping her hand in his, after the salutation of the

morning was over, he drew her towards a door on the opposite side of the drawing-room, saying—

“ Come hither, Alice dear—I have something to show you.”

“ Where are you going to take me, Martindale ?” she said, following quietly.

“ Only to the little drawing-room on the other side of the billiard-room,” he answered.

Now the little drawing-room was a good way from the large drawing-room, and still farther from the breakfast-room. Moreover, it was a room which Lady Martindale seldom if ever visited. Alice had no scruple, however, and saw nothing more in Lord Martindale’s manner than the brotherly affection with which he was wont to treat her. She had no notion that the change of feelings which Kate had foreseen—I might almost say, had prophesied—could have come on so rapidly.

The room to which he led her was one

of which he himself was fond, and in which he frequently sat ; and, when he had opened the door and drawn her into the middle of the apartment, he pointed with his finger towards the wall opposite to his usual place ; and, raising her eyes, she beheld a picture of herself which had been painted about two years before, and had remained without a frame put away in a store-room. Now, it was not only beautifully framed, but covered with a large sheet of plate glass, then a great rarity.

“ Oh, who did that ? ” exclaimed Alice, with a well-pleased smile. “ I have not seen it for these two years.”

“ I ordered it to be done,” said Lord Martindale, “ very soon after you went ; and I brought you now to show it to you, dear Alice, that you might see we have been thinking of you even, perhaps, while somebody has been stealing your little heart away from us.”

“ Oh, no, Martindale,” replied Alice, with a glowing cheek. “ Nobody has—

nobody could. There is no change in me from what I was when I left you and dear Lady Martindale. I am as much your own Alice as ever."

"Mine? Mine?" repeated Lord Martindale, with an eager and joyful look. "Oh, Alice, that you were really mine, that you would be really mine."

Alice withdrew her hand from his, and trembled a good deal. "Hush, hush, Martindale!" she said. "You forget Kate Haldimand; and you forget that I know your love for her, so much superior to me in every respect. Your love may yet be gratified, perhaps."

Lord Martindale shook his head; and a feeling of something like shame came over him, which for a moment prevented him from replying; but Alice went on; for she was a very different creature from what she had appeared twelve months before. At that period, the avowal he had made she would have caught at with girlish eagerness. For the time at least, it would

have seemed to satisfy her every aspiration. But now she was more exacting. She sought to be loved, fully, entirely loved ; and she felt that her heart would be satisfied with no less.

“ Do not shake your head,” she said. “ It is true. I told Lady Martindale what Kate herself generously told me, that she was engaged to Colonel Haldimand ; but you surely must have heard that he has been severely wounded, is very ill, and not likely to recover.—No, no, Martindale. You must not speak any more such words to me. Do not put a bar between yourself and happiness which yet may be yours.”

“ I have deserved this, Alice,” said Lord Martindale, with much emotion. “ I have deserved it well. I have been like a man who possessed a diamond and offered to change it for a ruby ; but then, Alice, I did not know its worth. But let me assure you that, were Kate Haldimand free to-morrow, I would never offer her my hand. I could not be satisfied with second love.

I must have the first freshness of the heart."

Alice shook her head with a somewhat melancholy smile.

"What would you say, Martindale, if I were to tell you the same?" she asked; but, seeing the look of deep mortification and distress that came into his face, her heart got the better of her; and, putting both her hands on his, she added, "No, no, Martindale, do not let me pain you. Women must not exact such things; and Alice Richmond is not so vain as to think that she ought to have been preferred to Kate Haldimand."

"She ought, she ought, in a thousand respects," replied her cousin, gladly, gliding his arm round her as he spoke; for he read assurance not only in her words but in her look. "But let me tell you how it was, if I can make it out in my own mind. Here, sit down by me, and listen to me for a very little. You shall see the very inmost feelings of my heart, I promise

you ; and then you shall tell me whether I may hope or not."

Alice smiled—almost laughed, indeed ; for the little hypocrite well knew that there was no alternative. She sat down by him, however ; and, holding her hand in his, he went on thoughtfully, as if examining his own heart as he spoke.

" You ought to have been preferred, Alice, to any one," he said ; " first, because I knew you well, and never from your childhood saw anything but what should have made me love you ; secondly, because I did love you, far better than I knew, myself.—Ay, you may shake your little head ; but I did, Alice ; and, if any one had told me you were to be taken from me, it would have shown me in a moment what I really did feel. I sought Kate Haldimand without ever thinking or dreaming that I should lose you."

" What, then, you would have had two wives at once ?" cried Alice, laughing. " Nay, Martindale, nay, I cannot tolerate that. '

"Do not jest, dear Alice," said her cousin, "with what to me is a painful consciousness of having been very foolish."

"Can you suppose," rejoined she, "that I would sit laughing with you here if I even dreamed of giving you any pain? That would be quite impossible, Martindale."

He kissed her warmly, and held her for a moment to his heart with very different feelings from those with which he had ever taken her in his arms before.

"Then all is bright," he said; "and not a cloud remains but the memory of the folly I committed in ever thinking of any one else."

"Never think of it again, Martindale," said Alice, "unless it be to ask your own heart even now if you are quite, quite sure of its feelings. As the old Scotch song says, Martindale,

'It is well to be off with the old love
Before you be on with the new.'"

“ That is unkind, Alice,” said Martindale. “ I never felt anything for Kate Haldimand the least like what I feel for you now ; and indeed you must not doubt me.”

“ Nor do I,” she said, tenderly. “ I believe you with all a woman’s faith, Martindale. But I must not talk so seriously ; for my eyes have got a trick of overflowing lately whenever I suffer the feelings of my heart to rise up in rebellion ; and I must not let Lady Martindale see my eyes red. —So little do I doubt you, Martindale,” resumed she, after a pause, “ that I have a story to tell you about your former love—”

He shook his head reproachfully ; but she continued,

“ A story about the unfortunate situation in which she has been placed by poor Sir John Haldimand’s death, and moreover a task for you to perform which may bring you into immediate communication with her. See, is not that confidence ?”

“ We can talk of all that afterwards, Alice dear,” replied Lord Martindale. “ I shall always have a great regard for Kate Haldimand, and be most happy to do anything to serve or assist her.”

“ You would be very wrong if you were not,” replied Alice, warmly ; “ for she is worthy of every service.”

“ But let us talk now, my love,” said Lord Martindale, “ of our own plans, and our own happiness.”

They did so talk ; and at the end of half an hour, Lord Martindale was in the smaller room below where the morning meal was usually served.

He found his mother seated at the breakfast table, with some papers and bills beside her, waiting for the urn to be brought in ; and, as soon as he appeared, she lifted up her eyes and said—

“ You are late, Martindale. We are all late, I think, to-day. Early-rising Alice is not down. Do tell me,” she added, pointing to a tradesman’s bill, “ is not this charge greatly too much ? You know more about

carriage-springs than I do ; but it seems to me enormous."

Lord Martindale quietly took up all the papers lying by his mother's side, and put them at a distant part of the table.

"Now listen to me, Lady Martindale, dear mother, mine," he said, drawing a chair close to her. "Do you know you are soon to be a dowager ?"

"Indeed ?" said Lady Martindale, in an indifferent tone, guessing at once the whole process of the affair. "Who is to be the new my lady ? The dairy-maid ? She is a very pretty girl ; but I hardly think her fortune suitable."

"Pshaw !" replied Lord Martindale. "I am quite serious, my dear mother. I am going to marry, and that as soon as possible."

"I don't doubt it in the least," replied Lady Martindale, with provoking coolness. "But who is your choice ? You have not told

me that yet. Do not keep me in suspense."

"My cousin Alice," replied Lord Martindale ; and, almost at the same moment, the urn was brought in. Lady Martindale, not content with this interruption, must needs keep the man to give him half-a-dozen unimportant directions before she made the slightest comment on her son's communication ; and, even after he was gone, proceeded to make the tea, as if she had hardly heard what Lord Martindale said.

"Well, my dear mother, do speak," he exclaimed, at length.

"Well, my dear son," she answered, laughing at his impatience, "what would you have me say ? I think it will do very well. Alice is a dear, good little girl, a lady in every respect ; and now she has a very fair fortune—though, perhaps, not as much as one could have wished, yet quite enough to remove any objection. I do not, indeed like cousins, marrying in general ;

but there have been no such marriages in the family for several generations. They say, where they frequently occur, it brings in insanity ; but I don't think there's any chance of your going mad, Martindale ?”

“ Nor of you either, my dear mother,” replied her son, half in jest, half in bitterness.

“ In every other I think respect it will do very well,” replied his mother ; “ and as to the misfortune of being cousins, we cannot help it. You are quite sure of Alice agreeing, I suppose, from your look and manner. But tell me when and how was all this arranged—by secret correspondence, or between the hall and the drawing-room yesterday, or in some snug little corner this morning ?”

Lord Martindale was half angry, but he answered, laughing—

“ The latter, I suppose I must say. I took Alice this morning to show her her picture hung up in the little drawing-room,

and then I told her how I should like to possess the original."

"Ay, by the way," said Lady Martindale, "that bill ought to be paid—for the frame and glass I mean : you know they charged twenty-two pounds. I've got the bill in the sofa-table drawer."

Lord Martindale could have stamped ; for his mother, by her cool indifference to that which was of deep and thrilling interest to him, provoked him more than she had ever provoked him before.

"Well, my dear mother," he said impatiently, "we will talk about bills another time. Shall I go and bring Alice and tell her that you are ready to receive her with the affection of a mother ?"

"Oh dear, certainly," replied Lady Martindale, as if the propriety of so doing had never struck her before. "Dear child, I have always loved her as a daughter all her life, and shall only love her better now as your wife. Where is she ?—in the little drawing-room ?"

“No, she has gone to her own room,” said Lord Martindale.

“Stay, stay, Martindale,” said his mother. “Send up her maid. It will be more proper.”

“Poo, nonsense,” cried Lord Martindale. “I will tell her myself.” And away he went.

He knocked at Alice’s door, and she opened it herself, with her face a little pale; for she had been moved by strong emotions too; and the struggle to suppress them had caused her some pain. His radiant look, however, re-assured her at once; and, taking her hand, he drew her out of the room, saying—

“Come, dear Alice, come to my mother.”

“What does she say?” asked Alice, with some anxiety still in her tone; for there are hearts that shrink from the least coldness more timidly than from a real injury; and they are never understood by the selfish or the worldly.

“She said,” replied Lord Martindale, “that she had always loved you as a daughter from your childhood, and would only love you better as my wife.”

Alice would not venture on a reply, but went with him in silence. When they entered the breakfast-room, Lady Martindale rose, and, with much more warmth than she usually displayed, or indeed felt, opened her arms to receive her fair niece. Alice cast herself upon her bosom; but then the feelings which she had long kept down mastered her completely; and she wept.

“Nay, my dear Alice,” said the elder lady, “do not agitate yourself. You cannot doubt my affection, nor how gladly I receive you as a daughter. Come, dry your tears. You will really make your eyes quite red—I positively must have those great folds altered. I wonder how the people could think of making that dress so. It would be bad enough in any light stuff; but in bombazine it is quite frightful.”

Alice had nearly gone into hysterics, so hard did the inclination to laugh and the inclination to cry struggle against each other. She soon got over it, however; and the absurdity did her good by changing the course of her ideas. All the accessories of breakfast were brought in; and the meal proceeded comfortably enough, Lady Martindale leading the conversation to the most common-place topics, as if Alice and her son had been already married twenty years.

She was more considerate after breakfast, however, and left them to walk alone in the sunny park while she went to consider various arrangements regarding Alice Richmond's fortune, which, to say sooth, had never been out of her mind during the whole morning.

"I must arrange about all the settlements myself with Mr. Harding," she said. "Martindale will be committing some foolery, if I let him have anything to do with it. A part of the ready-money may very well be invested in buying up that farm

that keys into the estate. Then it will all be in a ring-fence. I wonder if they'll have many children! But I forgot about that other matter." And ringing the bell, she told the servant to send Miss Richmond's maid to her.

The woman came, not knowing what Lady Martindale could want with her, and under some little alarm; for Lady Martindale was very awful in the household; but she was greatly relieved by her ladyship's first words.

"Really, Mrs. Stitchell," said Lady Martindale, "I am quite ashamed of the way they have made my niece's dresses. The people can know nothing about their business."

"They are very bad indeed, my lady," replied Mrs. Stitchell; "but I was so engaged at the time, and there were so many other things to do, that I had not time to set them right."

"Well, we must have it done before Sunday," said Lady Martindale. "You

had better bring down one of the black dresses to me; and I will show you how it ought to be altered."

This was done; and, dress and settlements having been fully considered, Lady Martindale had expended all the emotions which she could afford for her son's marriage.

About an hour after, Lord Martindale and Alice returned; and he was heard ringing the bell in the hall. His voice sounded next, speaking so loud that Lady Martindale heard him say,

"Tell William Ball to saddle a horse for me—the new gray—and let him get ready to come with me. Tell Hughes to go up to my dressing-room."

A moment after he hastily entered the drawing-room with Alice.

"Dear mother, I'm going away for awhile," he said. "I shall be back to-morrow or next day. Comfort my Alice for me while I am gone."

"But what is it about?" asked Lady Martindale.

"That is a secret," replied her son, laughing. "Don't tell, Alice. Mind, you promised not to tell."

"Don't do anything foolish, Martindale," said his mother; and then, after a very brief pause, added, "I am going to-night to write to Mr. Harding, Alice's other guardian, for the purpose of asking him to come and speak with me upon business; but there is no use in my asking him for to-morrow or the next day, if you are to be away."

"Oh, yes, ask him for the day after to-morrow," said her son. "I shall be back, I dare say, by dinner time, and, if not, early the morning after."

Lady Martindale was satisfied. He was not going to talk about settlements with Mr. Harding without her presence; and that was all she cared to know.

CHAPTER VIII.

A man's bitterest enemy could not have wished him more misery than was endured by Sir William Haldimand throughout that long day after the visitors from the village had left him. From time to time, some interruption was afforded to his dark and gloomy thoughts by reports that were brought him, or by various matters of business which he had to transact ; but it was only the change of one painful subject for another. First came the intelligence from the lodge that a formal information had been laid against Matthew

Hush for purloining the will of Sir John Haldimand, and that a search warrant had been issued in consequence. All the statements seemed to be so near the truth, as it was in Sir William Haldimand's knowledge, that he could hardly believe that some very strong evidence had not been obtained against Master Hush ; but he consoled himself with the thought—

“ Let them search ! They will find nothing. Hush is too shrewd to save such a document to be evidence against himself ! ”

He did not know his man as well as his man knew him.

After that, came reports of unsuccessful efforts to find the unhappy fugitive whom his conduct had driven forth from her ancient home. These were bitterer than all. Remorse, mingled with alarm, had seized him. A doubt—a vague and awful surmise—rose up like a dreary vision, which made his heart feel as if it would

burst under the terror. These reports were only chequered by conferences with the undertaker, and by all the sad business of the funeral pomp.

Who can talk pleasantly of such things, even in regard to persons in whom we have had no interest ? The smell of our own grave rises to our nostrils whenever we open the earth for another. Each word regarding the burial has a tale of mortality for ourselves ; and the selfish man, whose thoughts are not withdrawn from himself by grief for the departed, feels, perhaps, more than others the stern admonition addressed to him.

At length, the long, long day closed, and the wearier night began ; but it was not destined to pass in uninterrupted thought. About nine o'clock, Sir William Haldimand's groom appeared to announce to him that a boy with a note, which he would deliver to no one but himself, had arrived at Haldistow Hall.

“It is the same boy, sir,” he said, “who

brought you over a letter to Dingle two nights ago."

"Show him in," said Sir William ; and, in a minute after, farmer Bagshot's son stood before the baronet.

With perfect self-assurance the boy presented his note, saying—

"From Mr. Hush, your honour. He said I was to give it to nobody but yourself ; and that made me ax to see you."

"Well," replied the baronet, "stay there, on that side of the table." And opening the note, he read it, taking care to hold the paper in such a position that the boy could not see what was written.

"Master Hush has heard of this search-warrant, I suppose," said Sir William to himself, "and is in a fright."

The letter, however, showed another object, and was to the following effect :

"HONOURED SIR,

"I have not come up to Haldistow during the day as I intended, as I hear a

good many unpleasant things have taken place. You have doubtless been informed of the event which has occurred at the lodge, and of my trunks having been broken open in a very scandalous manner, and examined. True enough, they could find nothing to compromise your humble servant in any way. *That* I took care of ; but the thing has affected me a good deal ; and I do think it would be best, on all considerations, and especially for my own health, if I were to take a little tour out of England. You were kind enough once to promise me a thousand pounds, upon certain contingencies which have occurred ; and this sum it would be absolutely necessary for me to possess, ere I departed. May I then ask the favour of you to send me a cheque for the amount on your London banker, by the bearer ? The moment I receive it, I shall start for London, and the next day for Helvoetsluy.

“ It is, I think, more than probable,

that I shall take up my abode altogether in a foreign country ; and, as I then may never have the honour of seeing you again, I beg now to express my deep sense of your kindness and condescension, and of all the benefits you have conferred on

“ Your most humble and devoted servant,

“ MATTHEW HUSH.

“ P. S. It is remarkable that they have not taken out a warrant against myself, after the information sworn.

“ P. P. S. I send this by the boy who carried a former letter, and have taken the liberty of desiring him to give it into no hands but your own ; for I know the habit that servants have of peeping.”

“ Damn him !” muttered Sir William Haldimand. “ The hypocrite !”

The boy’s ears were not shut ; but he looked as stolid as a post.

Sir William Haldimand, who till now

had been standing, seated himself in his chair after this exclamation, and fell into thought. No services are so unwillingly paid as those of a rogue, even by a roguish employer. Sir William Halldimand would willingly have found some excuse for not discharging his debt.

“The rascal is seeking to escape me,” he thought. “Well, he is quite right to take care of himself. Neither do I know that his services can be any more valuable. I will send him a hundred pounds, and tell him I will remit the other afterwards.”

He mused, and thought vaguely over the circumstances. There are different kinds of thought, which must be expressed differently, to make the reader comprehend what is meant. There is that sort of pondering, desultory consideration of a subject which cannot be put into language; and there is that more definite form of thought where, either as arguments addressed to itself, or as decisions arrived at from meditation, the mind speaks words, as it were.

The latter may be given in the form of a soliloquy: the former can never be so expressed; and the former was the state of mind into which Sir William Haldimand now fell. He thought vaguely. He suffered his mind to hover, as it were, over all the circumstances, scanning the ground beneath him with an eagle's eye; and then, after a few minutes thus spent, thought became more definite, and clothed itself in language once more.

"Hush is just a man to refuse to go, unless he gets the whole sum," said the baronet to himself. "Well, let him. His so doing would be a receipt in full. But then, if any misadventure should happen—if some of this scoundrel's exploits should put his neck in jeopardy—he is very likely to tell the whole of this story, and merit pardon by his revelations. He can *prove* nothing indeed; for I knew his cunning too well, to put the orders in writing. But then, such a charge itself is damning. I should have cold looks and short sentences

ever after. Coupled with the strange loss of the will, and this man, Notbeame's suspicions, it would never do. Better he were out of the country."

If honour and conscience and principle were as powerful over the mind of man as the world's opinion, what a different state of society we should have! The sources of all crime would be dried up. It is because we believe evil can be kept secret that we first commit evil. When discovered in one wrong act, we become hardened to the commission of another ; and a multitude of wrong acts often renders us vain of them. We are sure to have many companions, sympathisers, admirers ; and, making from them a world of our own, we take from it our world's opinion.

Sir William Halldimand had entertained few scruples in anything he had done. No moral check had restrained him ; and he ventured in minor things to brave the world's opinion as boldly as any man ; but that was upon points where the world was

likely to be divided, where, though many might condemn, many would uphold. This, however, was a question where the minority in his favour would be very small indeed, and would not even venture to express dissent from the general verdict.

“He were better out of England,” he thought. “Yes, he were better out of England.—Then, the sooner some of his rogueries carry him to the gallows, I shall be the safer.”

Thus thinking he took out his cheque-book; but, ere he wrote the cheque, walked into the other room, not to let the boy see what he was doing.

“Stay there,” he said. The boy nodded his head; and, while Sir William was gone, took three or four lumps of sugar from the basin, and put them in his pocket.

Sir William Haldimand sat down, dipped a pen in the ink, and then paused for a moment. He was considering whether five hundred would not do; but he thought

it dangerous to try it ; and he drew the cheque for a thousand. Then, folding it up in half a sheet of paper without writing a word in the envelope, he sealed the whole and addressed the parcel to Mr. Matthew Hush.

“ There, give him that,” said Sir William, handing the little packet to the boy. The boy took it, and placed it beside the sugar ; then, raising his keen eyes to Sir William’s face, he said, “ Mr. Hush told me to ask your honour if you had sent the certificates of good character which you promised him ; for he wants them very bad.”

“ True enough,” thought Sir William Haldimand. “ He *does* want them very bad.” Such were the internal words ; but, in reply, he only said, “ No, I have not time to write them now. Tell him, I will send them, if he will let me know where he is.—There, that will do. I cannot give them to-night.”

“ Mr. Hush says, please your worship,

continued the persevering boy, “that he wants to know if your honour has heard anything of Miss Haldimand, who, they say, has been murdered.”

“Murdered!” exclaimed Sir William Haldimand. “Disappeared, I know she has; but murdered—no, not murdered.”

“Hope not, your honour,” replied the boy; “but, just about five o’clock to-night, they found a good lot of blood down on the road just by the Mere, a couple of hundred yards or more from Tom Not-beame’s; and she was last seen going down that way. So, in the village, they all think she has been murdered and thrown into the Mere. It’s for all the world as if a horse had been bled there, Martyr says.”

“God of Heaven!” exclaimed Sir William. “Get out of the room! He will drive me mad.” And he rang the bell furiously, while the boy disappeared.

As soon as the groom presented himself,

he asked for intelligence, telling him what the boy had said.

“ It’s all true, sir,” replied the groom, with a shake of the head ; “ but they hav’n’t found the body yet. There’s blood there, sure enough, and part of her dress torn off, which the maid can swear to.”

Sir William Haldimand waved his hand ; and the servant withdrew. But who can tell the agony of the baronet when he was left alone ? He sat for near an hour, with his eyes buried in his hands ; and then he rose and walked the room, with a rapid and irregular pace ; and then he wrung his hands, and stamped his foot, and played the antics of a madman. His mind seemed all a wild chaos ; but out of it rose one thought, dark, gloomy, menacing. He could not banish it. He could not hide it from his sight.

“ I will be satisfied,” he repeated. “ I will be satisfied. I will not live in this

horrible doubt any longer. Heaven and earth! that would be terrible."

At that moment, how willingly would he have given all that he had unjustly acquired, or more, far more, to recall Kate Haldimand to life. The rebound of his own vengeance crushed him.

"I will be satisfied—I will be satisfied," he repeated continually ; but he had long hours to wait before he could be satisfied. The servants went slowly to their beds. It was past midnight before the whole house was still ; and then Sir William Haldimand issued forth from his room with a light and a key in his hands. He walked straight down to the little study, and gazed at the old oak chest ; then closed and locked both the doors, and proceeded with his task undisturbed.

The first operation was to remove gently that end of the slip of paper connecting the lid and the body of the chest to which his own seal was attached ; and then, ap-

plying the key which he had received from Hush to the lock, he easily turned it.

The lid was lifted the next moment ; and a great number of papers were seen lying in the bottom of the chest. Some were merely tied up with red tape. Others were enveloped and sealed. The first packet he took up was labelled “ Poor Emily’s letters ;” and Sir William Haldimand dropped them back into the chest with a shudder. The next was a packet of his own letters ; but the third was a covered and folded package, bearing the following inscription :

“ All the papers and certificates concerning the birth and history of my dear adopted child, Kate. To be given to her after my death, and, in the first instance, read by her alone.— J. H.”

William Haldimand trembled violently ; but his eyes were still fixed upon the packet. It was closed with a large black seal. The words were written by the

hand of him who was now dead, and in the anticipation of death. He longed to open it ; and yet he hesitated. It was like rifling the grave.

His hand shook so much that he feared, if he attempted to unfasten the packet in the way he had intended, he should tear the paper. He sat down, therefore, on the little sofa, and tried to compose himself. There was a large table-seal lying in the inkstand. He examined it, and found it was that with which the black w x had been impressed. This suggested a new course. He took a penknife, and held it in the flame of the candle till it was hot enough to melt the wax but not to burn the paper ; and then, slipping it under the fold, he readily unsealed the packet.

It was done ; but yet he paused ; and the same nervous agitation came upon him again, making him shake violently. He rose, and walked once or twice up and down the room, still keeping the packet in

his hand. Suddenly he heard the sound of footsteps on the gravel of the terrace ; and then a voice said :

“ That is the room. There is a light in it now.”

Another fear now seized Sir William Haldimand.

“ There is somebody up still,” he said to himself, “ or else people coming to the house.” Hastily replacing the packet, he closed the lid of the old oak chest. In a moment, however, his high courage returned, for he was by nature a man of daring ; and, opening the chest again, he took out the papers, saying proudly : “ Let them come. Who dares intrude here ?”

The rally of his spirits gave him resolution for his farther task, a task more terrible than confronting any living man, but yet one which he was impelled, by an irresistible impulse, to accomplish. He listened for a moment, however, to ascertain if any one was approaching the house ;

but the steps receded, and all was silent : there was no ring of the bell ; no opening and closing door. The stillness of death was all around. Walking slowly to the side of the table, he opened the packet.

There were several folded papers within. Laying down the rest, he took the one at the top, an old and faded document, written in a cramped and rugged hand, and signed at the bottom in a more dashing style. It seemed a certificate ; and he held it close to the light to read. It quivered in his fingers. His eyes, too, seemed dim. The writing was large enough ; but for a moment or two, to him, it seemed all indistinct. Then, however, he read, with his eyes straining as if they would have burst from the sockets, his lip quivering with eagerness, his brow knitted, and his temples looking in the pale light as if they were pressed in. He muttered over the few first words indistinctly ; but then came two names, that of a man and that of a woman,

which he read in a louder tone. The last he uttered almost in a scream ; and it was Emily Haldimand !

But no sooner had the words passed his lips, than he sank down heavily on the floor, and lay between the chest and the table like a dead man.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards, Matthew Hush and Bill Bagshot, or rather Farmer Bagshot, as he was now called, walked on in silence. At length the latter said :

“ Well, Mat, what are you up to ?”

“ Why, Bill, it’s brewing ; it’s brewing,” said Matthew Hush. “ I’ll tell you presently.”

The farmer did not seem satisfied with the delay, doubtless thinking, in his friendly zeal, that his counsel might be very useful to his companion in that species of brewing to which the mind of Mr. Hush was

most accustomed, and in which he himself, William Bagshot, was a much experienced adept.

“ But I say, what’s the lay ?” he asked. “ You can tell me how things stand ; and then we can talk about it. What the deuce can the young ooman be doing out of the house at this time of night ?”

“ Oh, that’s easily told,” answered Matthew Hush. “ Sir William hates her like poison ; and I see how it is, quite as well as if I had been there. I know him, every inch and turn of him, a great deal better than he knows himself ; and I’m as sure as if I had had my ear at the key-hole that, after he had sent all the old servants away, and thought he could do just as he pleased—”

“ He has turned her out too,” interrupted Mr. Bagshot.

“ No, not just turned out perhaps,” replied Mr. Hush, in a delicate tone, to mark the niceness of his distinction. “ He has driven her out. He has made the house

too hot to hold her. He has sent for her, and bullied her, and taunted her, and said all sorts of sharp and cutting things to her, looking her through and through all the time just as he used to do with my poor mistress and Miss Emily. My mistress bore it, and died ; and Miss Emily ran away, and died too. Oh, I know him ! I think I can see him now, standing and staring at Miss Kate through his spectacles, and saying something that seems to run through one like a sword. She has been used to kindness and gentleness all her life, poor thing, and been petted and spoiled—no, I won't say, spoiled. They couldn't spoil her if they tried ; but she has never had a hard word in her life before, I'll answer for it ; and the first are hard to bear. So she has run out to get a lodgings somewhere else ; but I wonder she did not take Susan with her."

A pause ensued, which lasted some little time ; and then Mr. Bagshot observed in a thoughtful tone :

“ Well, Mat, I don’t see what you’ve got to do with this job. What do you mean to say to the young ooman ? and how am I to help you ?”

“ Why, I think if I could get hold of her,” said Matthew Hush, “ it might be pleasant.”

“ Why, you don’t mean to marry her, Mat ?” exclaimed his companion.

“ No,” replied Matthew, with a slight smile. “ That would be pleasant too, and might do well enough in Ireland at the cost of an abduction case ; but it would not do on this side of the water. No, no, Bill ; but I think if I could get hold of her, and persuade her to come up and lodge at your house, we might make something out of it. It would be like having two strings to one’s bow, what between her and Sir William ; for you know she is heiress under the will, and he is heir without the will. So I can make which ever I like master of eighteen or twenty thousand a-year.”

“ Ay, I see,” replied Farmer Bagshot.
“ No bad notion.”

Again a pause succeeded, while they walked on with rapid steps in the direction of the Haldimand Arms. At length, Bagshot inquired,

“ Wouldn’t it serve your purpose as well, Mat, to have her with some of her friends as to get hold of her yourself ?”

“ No, no,” answered Matthew Hush. “ I could manage well enough if I had only Mr. Richard to deal with. Lord bless you, Bill ! The parson is as simple as a child. I could twist him round my finger any way I liked ; but then there’s a fellow of the name of Greenshield—neither old nor young, as keen as the north-east wind, and as hard as a granite stone. I couldn’t deal with him at all—I know I couldn’t—I feel I couldn’t. It is very strange. He looks always as if he knew me ; but, however, he saved her life like a water-dog ; and, from what I hear, he is

certainly to be one of her guardians. I couldn't deal with him at all."

"I see, I see," replied Farmer Bagshot. "That wouldn't do. *I* know the man. I've seen him. You won't make much of him. There's no help for it. You must try and get hold of her herself; but, if she does not choose to come, what will you do then, Mat?"

"We must coax her as much as possible," said Matthew Hush, in a musing tone; "and, if we can't manage it that way, we must make her—ay, Bill, we must make her. If I once got her quietly where I could talk to her and wheedle her, I'd get her to do anything I liked—put her hand to anything; for she knows nothing of life, Bill, and is as quiet and gentle a little creature as ever was seen. 'Pon my life, it's a shame to have treated her so; and I should like to put her into her rights, if I could do it without hurting myself or losing a good round sum which I think I may make of it. I don't know why, but I've been always fond of her from the first."

Farmer Bagshot gave a low, unpleasant sort of laugh ; but then he asked,

“ How would you manage ? You would have to tell her that you had got the will, I suppose.”

“ I never said I had got it,” answered Matthew Hush. “ No, Bill, no ! But I’ll tell you what I *could* do. I might tell her that for five thousand pounds I could show her where to find it.”

“ Ha !” ejaculated Mr. Bagshot. “ No bad notion. I see you’re up to something, Mat, and, as the sailors say, keep a good look out a-head. But,” continued he, reverting to another part of the subject, “ won’t it be dangerous to force her away if she don’t come quietly ? It’ll make a rare hullabaloo in the country when she comes to get out ; and we might be prosecuted.”

“ Not a bit of it,” exclaimed Hush. “ We can easily pretend that we thought she was mad.”

“ ’Tis somewhat like a mad woman,”

observed Mr. Bagshot, “ for a young lady like that to walk about the country at night and no one with her. Well, I’ll go you halves in the risks ; but I must have some of the profit, Mat.”

They stopped, put their heads together, and talked for a minute or so in whispers, interrupted by louder exclamations.

“ Not a bit of it,” cried Hush.

Farmer Bagshot replied, in a low tone ; and then Hush rejoined in the same.

“ Damn me if I do,” said the farmer.

“ Well, I can do without you,” answered Hush. “ But listen, Bill, listen.” And then they spoke together again in whispers, till, at length, they seemed to accommodate matters, and moved on for about a hundred yards farther.

They now reached the top of one of the little sandhills, covered over with a scanty crop of heath, from which they could descry the road running past Tom Notbeame’s house, with its two branches, one keeping close to the edge of the Mere,

the other cutting through the common towards Halcombe.

“She must have got down by this time,” said farmer Bagshot.

“Hist, hist!” said the worthy Matthew. “There she is, standing by the side of the Mere, just as if she were going to throw herself in. That will make a good excuse for taking her away. Lord ! I wouldn’t have her drown herself for the world.” And he laughed. “We must get her farther away from the house, however,” he added. “If she were to scream, we might have the people out ; for it must be done one way or another, Bill. You stay here, and I’ll go and lure her away.”

“I’ll come round by the little lane under the bank,” said farmer Bagshot. “Get her up near the waterfall. That makes a devil of a noise.”

Hush nodded his head, and the two worthy companions parted, the valet creeping down into the road a little below the Haldimand Arms, and then walking on

with an unconcerned gait, whistling an opera air. His figure was perfectly apparent in the moonlight ; and the sounds that proceeded from his lips were clear, mellow, and cheerful ; though, every now and then, slightly saddened by a melancholy cadence with a flattened third. Kate stood by the side of the little lake, and only moved just so far as to look round towards the musician. She was within call of Tom Notbeame's house ; and she thought she recognised the air as one she had heard the butler whistle at his work, for he was a great whistler, even when his thoughts were busiest. On he came ; and as he approached nearer and nearer, she was satisfied that it was Matthew Hush.

Now it must be remembered that Kate had never heard a word against Sir John Haldimand's butler, and was quite ignorant of the suspicions entertained by her good friend, Tom Notbeame. She had never much liked Matthew Hush, it is true ; but he had always been perfectly respect-

ful and attentive to her ; she had been accustomed, for a long time, to inhabit the same house with him ; and to see him approaching, was indeed a relief to her.

Suddenly, when close to her, Matthew Hush stopped, as if in surprise at seeing a woman there at that hour of the night ; and Kate, raising her voice, said, in her own sweet tones—

“ Mr. Hush, I am glad it is you. I wish you would do me a little service.”

“ Dear me, Miss Haldimand,” exclaimed Hush, with well-dissembled surprise, “ I beg your pardon, ma’am, but, gracious Heaven, what can have brought you here alone at this hour of the night ?”

“ Unkindness has driven me to seek another home, Mr. Hush,” replied Kate.

“ Then, he has turned you out too ?” cried Hush, in accents of the utmost indignation. “ The villain !”

“ Not exactly turned me out,” answered Kate ; “ but I want you to go into Tom Not-beame’s—I do not like to go myself, because there seems a great number of riot-

ous people there—and tell him I wish he would drive me over to Halcombe in his gig."

She was going on to tell him that her maid Susan was to go with her, and would soon be there; but Hush interrupted her, saying,

"Pray come a little this way, Miss Hal-dimand. I have something very particular to say to you, ma'am, which the people there must not overhear. They are a bad set in there just now, ma'am, and Tom Not-beame is out in his gig, Heaven knows where. I will soon get you some conveyance, however. Only just come a little this way, and hear what I have got to tell you."

Kate had no suspicion of the man whatever; and she walked along by his side for some twenty or thirty yards. She thought that quite far enough to prevent anything he said from being heard; but he still walked on; and she followed somewhat farther, thinking his conduct a little strange, but not liking to show any doubt. At length, however, when fully a hundred and

fifty yards from the house, she stopped.

"This is quite far enough, Mr. Hush," she said. "They cannot hear anything you say here."

"Oh, yes, indeed they can, Miss Haldimand," he replied. "If there is anybody down at the end of the garden, and there was when I came out, they could hear quite well; and I am afraid of eaves-dropping."

Kate saw that what he asserted was barely possible, and walked on still a little farther, although doubt had arisen in her mind; and doubt is a very tenacious kind of thing. She recollects, however, that her maid was coming down the road, and that the path led on the way to meet her; but still, after a few steps farther, she paused, and said gravely,

"Now what is it?"

They were at a very short distance from the little cascade, which I have before mentioned, and which, from the great masses of broken rock and stone that it leaped

and bounded amongst, gave out a loud and roaring sound. Mr. Hush calculated that, unless she screamed very loud indeed, a cry would not distinctly reach Tom Notbeame's; and, at all events, he had his excuse ready in case of detection, which was a precaution he was fond of adopting.

“What I wanted to say, ma'am,” he replied, “was, a word or two in regard to the will that is lost; but I have been just thinking, as we came up the road, of what you were saying just now, that you want to get to Halcombe. Now, Tom Notbeame is out with his gig, I know, and there is no conveyance to be got in Haldistow. That I know too; for I could not get one myself, and was obliged to leave all my things at the lodge.”

“It is very unfortunate indeed,” said Kate, musing. “I suppose I shall be obliged to go back to the Rectory, though I wished very much to see and consult with my good old friend, Mrs. Giles, who is at Halcombe.”

“I think it can be managed quite easily, Miss Haldimand,” replied Master Hush, in his softest and most insinuating tones. “I have a friend who lives not three quarters of a mile from here, who has a very nice chaise in which he will be only too proud and too happy to drive you over to Hal-combe. He is an elderly widower with one son; and, if you will allow me to attend you to his house, I can tell you what I was going to say by the way.”

“I cannot do that,” replied Kate, thinking of Susan, and becoming a little apprehensive as to what had become of her; “but you can bring the chaise here, Mr. Hush.”

“Indeed you had better come, Miss Haldimand,” replied Matthew Hush. “You must recollect he is not a person who lets out chaises; and I cannot say to him, ‘Go and take your chaise for Miss Haldimand.’”

“Who is he?” said Kate, growing more and more doubtful from the man’s evident eagerness.

“A very respectable man, ma’am,” replied Hush, “and a man of property, farmer Bagshot, of Harble Farm.”

Now, although Kate knew no cause of suspicion against Hush, she knew of plenty against farmer Bagshot ; for she had many a time heard Sir John Haldimand declare that he was the cunningest and most incorrigible rogue in the parish. Her mind was made up at once not to go ; but she thought it better to decline civilly, assigning a reason.

“I cannot go, Mr. Hush,” she said ; “for I expect my maid, Susan, every moment. She had only to deliver a message at the lodge for me, and then follow me.”

“The more need for haste,” thought Matthew Hush, who heard the steps of farmer Bagshot approaching ; and he said, aloud—“Indeed you *must* come, Miss Haldimand. It is impossible that you can stay here alone. I can easily leave word for your maid that you are gone to farmer Bagshot’s.”

He laid an emphasis on the word, “must,”

which Kate did not like. It alarmed her ; and she replied,

“ I certainly shall not go, Mr. Hush ;” and, as she spoke, she took a step towards Tom Notbeame’s house.

Hush, however, caught her by the arm, saying something she did not half hear in her alarm and indignation.

“ How dare you touch me, sir ?” she exclaimed, struggling to free her arm from his grasp. But the scoundrel held fast ; and the next moment, Bill Bagshot was on the other side. He knew not exactly what part he was to play ; but he clearly saw that the time for hesitation or persuasion was over ; and, seizing poor Kate by the other arm, he exclaimed—

“ Come, come, Miss, you *must* go. There’s no use making a noise.”

His words showed at once that it was a pre-arranged scheme between the two worthy compeers ; and Kate, terrified beyond description, uttered a loud and piercing shriek. Hush, though alarmed,

tried to hurry her forward along the path by which Bagshot had come ; but Kate continued to shriek for help ; and at the same moment he heard the sound of a horse's feet. He would now willingly have let go his hold and run ; but Bagshot, whose heart was stouter, held fast, and tried to put his hand over Kate's mouth to stop her cries.

A man on horseback now appeared on the road ; and, dashing up to them, he exclaimed in a loud voice—

“ Let go, you scoundrels, or I'll send a bullet through your brains.”

As he spoke, he sprang from his horse, casting the rein loose ; and they could see by the moonlight that he had a pistol in his hand. Hush let go his hold and ran ; but Bagshot still grasped Kate's arm, irritated by the excitement of the adventure, the unexpected resistance, and the probability of disappointment.

“ Damn you, if you come near me,” he exclaimed, “ I'll knock your brains out.”

“Take that, then,” cried the stranger, levelling his pistol with a laugh. “Lead is the best metal to settle accounts with such fellows as you.”

He pressed his finger on the trigger as he spoke ; the report rang upon the air ; and instantly Bagshot loosed his hold, and fell back upon the ground.

Kate staggered forward towards her deliverer, and, almost fainting with terror and agitation, caught one of the little birch trees for support.

“God of heaven, Kate!” exclaimed the stranger, as the moonlight shone upon her face. “Is that you, my dear girl? How came you here alone at this time of night?”

Kate gazed at him, without recognising either the features or the voice, and asked slowly and faintly—

“Oh, sir, who are you, who have come just in time to save me?”

“Who am I?” exclaimed the stranger, laughing, and approaching her. “Well,

that's difficult to say ; but, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I'm Harry Haldimand—your uncle—ay, your own real corporeal uncle. But I'll tell you more about that by and bye," he continued, in his usual rattling tone. " Hang it ! that fellow is up and off again. I thought I had given him enough for one. A runner, a runner ! But I will have my bird. Wait here a minute. I'll soon run him down. He has had a good knock, and must drop before long. I'll be back directly—I'll be back directly." And, springing to the side of the horse, which stood quietly enough upon the road, he took a pistol from the other holster, and set off across the heath after Bagshot as hard as he could go.

The farmer, however, knew all the turnings and windings better than his pursuer did ; and, though severely wounded with a ball in his right shoulder, he was not sufficiently weakened by the loss of blood to abate any of his speed. Thus, all that Harry Haldimand could do, was to keep

sight of him as he crossed the little hills and dells. He gained upon him, however, when he entered the lane leading direct to his own house ; for the man was becoming weaker every minute. But just when Harry Haldimand thought that a hundred yards more would put the object of his pursuit within his grasp, the worthy farmer darted through his own gate ; and the door of the house being instantly opened for his admission, closed sharply behind him as soon as he had entered.

Harry Haldimand was tolerably fool-hardy ; and his first impulse was to rush towards the door, without considering how many or of what character might be the inhabitants of the house. But as he approached he heard the sound of locks and bolts ; and, knowing that he had no power to force admission, he satisfied himself by noting particularly the whole aspect of the place, and then re-trod his steps towards the side of the Mere. He went more slowly than he had come, in order to mark

well every turn, so as to be able to find the place again ; yet he walked fast, and, on the whole, was not absent much more than a quarter of an hour ; but, when he returned to the spot where he had left Kate, he looked round without being able to perceive anything of her. There was the quiet Mere glistening in the moonlight, and the purple heath spreading in wavy lines far and wide, and the cascade coming glistening and sparkling down amidst the thin and scattered trees, and his horse, strayed some distance from the road, cropping the scanty herbage ; but Kate Haldimand was not there.

“She has gone to the little inn,” said Harry Haldimand to himself. “I’ll go and see after her. Poor dear girl! she has been terribly alarmed ; but what business had the little spectre out here at night ?”

Thus thinking, he walked along the road towards the Haldimand Arms ; but, before he had got more than half way, he paused and meditated again.

“Let me think,” he said to himself—“no easy task, by the way, when one is so much out of the habit. They tell me at Halcombe that my uncle, Sir John, is dead, and that my dear papa is at Haldistow Hall ; two good men, well lodged, but differently. Now then, is not this affair of Kate being out here at night very like a piece of my dearly beloved parent’s handiwork ? Can he have found out who she is, and have driven her out to gratify his insatiable vengeance ? Ah, poor Emily, poor Emily ! You loved me well, dear girl, although you were often maltreated on my account ; and so help me God, as I never abandon your child. What *I* have, *she* shall have ; and I will try and become better and wiser for her sake.—But I must take care what I am about, or I shall get into a scrape with my tender daddy. He is just as likely to kick his son out, as his daughter, or his daughter’s daughter. He is like a catamaran screwed to a ship’s

bottom. There is no knowing when he will explode ; and when he does, Lord have mercy upon us ! If this is his doing, and I meddle, there will be an awful effervescence. Meddle, however, I will ; but I'll do it cautiously, ascertaining the ground first. I'll just make sure that she is in safety, and then lie *perdu*, till I learn the whole facts."

With this determination, he approached Tom Notbeame's house, and took a step into the passage. The boy, Jack, was standing there, leaning his arms upon the window of the bar.

" He'll do," thought Harry Haldimand. " I say, my man," he continued, aloud, " has a young lady been here lately ?"

" Yes, sir," replied the boy, at once. " She came a minute or two ago, and is in the parlour talking to Stephen, Sir John's footman, and the rest of the people, about what has just happened."

" That'll do," said Henry Haldimand ;

and, turning away, he caught his horse, and rode off, little thinking that the young lady of whom the boy spoke was no other than Susan, Kate Haldimand's maid, at that moment enquiring for her mistress.

CHAPTER X.

OH, Nemesis, Nemesis, if you were not ubiquitous as well as all-powerful, what a task you would have in whipping the whole world into cover. Here am I, with some half dozen characters, more or less, upon my hands, and I cannot keep them from straggling about like a flock of unruly pigs. So that, no sooner have I driven one on, than another lags behind, and another goes galloping up the first turning he meets with. Upon my life I know not which to turn to next ; and, if I do not hit exactly upon the one which suits the reader's fancy,

I am sure to be blamed for leaving him so far behind. I will have my own way, however, and transport the reader to London, to see after the proceedings of a personage whom we have left a very long while, but in whom I myself take some interest, especially as he was not altogether fit to be trusted in London alone.

Richard Haldimand's whole thoughts were occupied with his son ; and his mind was very much depressed—more so, indeed, than when he quitted his own dwelling. There was something in the journey, and something in the sudden plunge out of the free air, and quiet, tranquil life of the country, into that turbid and muddy pool, called London, with its noise, its bustle, and its unceasing activity, its dingy atmosphere, its filthy streets, its crowded population, its ever-varying multitudes, its squalor and its poverty, its splendour and its wealth, its contrasts of crime and virtue, of honour and dishonesty, its accumulation of misery and horror, of enjoyment and

amusement, which always gave him a melancholy sensation whenever he entered it, and which oppressed him more than ever now, when his heart was saddened by the circumstances of his own fate, and by deep anxiety for his son.

It was towards the end of an autumn evening when the carriage in which he travelled rolled into the great city. Bright clouds, tinted with the rays of the setting sun, floated about in the sky, just as he was approaching ; but when he once got into the streets, neither setting sun, nor bright cloud, nor blue sky, was to be seen ; and the mass of heavy vapours, hanging listlessly in the motionless air, canopied the whole of that vast wilderness of brick and mortar, shutting out all but a faint yellowish gleam which pervaded the dull atmosphere.

He ordered the postboy to drive him to an inn which he had frequented in earlier days. To his disappointment, he found it full. The season of the year, indeed,

was not that in which many people are in Town ; but one of those things was going on which the lovers of London delight in—I know not well what : either a favorite singer for a few nights, or the execution of a notorious criminal, or some other great attraction ; and the hotel was quite full, as I have said. The people of the house directed him to another ; and on he went. He was more fortunate now, and got, what the head waiter called, capital rooms. If the reader's memory will go as far back as mine, he may easily comprehend what the words, "capital rooms," meant in those days. There were moreen curtains, somewhat fusty ; an old Turkey carpet, showing, in many places, the white threads of the web, and, in some, the floor between those white threads ; a large, black mahogany table, which Samson might have found more difficult to carry on his back than the gates of Gaza ; some very ponderous leather-cushioned dining-room chairs ; tall wine-

glasses on a sideboard in the corner, an ornament of many coloured straw in the fire-place, a quantity of small round balls of soot covering all the furniture, and a faint sickly smell of many generations of smoke. Such was his sitting-room ; and the bedroom corresponded so admirably that I need not give a description of it.

The aspect did not serve to raise Mr. Haldimand's spirits ; he seated himself for a moment, and gave himself up to melancholy thoughts.

“Fire lighted in a moment, sir,” said the head waiter, with the door in his hand. “Betsy chambermaid, fire No. 39.—Now be quick. Bustle, bustle.—What would you please to order for dinner, sir?—Desire a fire in the bed-room?—Bring you the bill of fare in a moment. Betsy chambermaid, do you hear?—Evening paper, sir. Light the candles directly.” And he applied a light which he held in his hand to the wicks of two wax-candles on the mantelpiece.

While he went to fetch the bill of fare, Mr. Haldimand mechanically took up the newspaper and approached the lights. He was, however, dislodged from his position the moment after, by the chamber-maid, with a black coal-scuttle and a tin candle-stick, small-poxed with drops of tallow, who came to lay and light the fire ; and, sitting down at the table, he turned to look for the ship news. The next instant, the waiter attacked him in the flank with the bill of fare ; but Mr. Haldimand read on ; and, a moment after, his own servant entered the room to inquire into the disposition of his portmanteau. Seeing how his master was occupied, however, and, knowing not only his habits but his mood at the moment, he beckoned to the waiter, and held a brief conference with him.

“Just send him up anything,” he said. “He’ll eat it, and know nothing about it. But let it be good of its kind, whatever it is. He’s thinking of his son, the colonel,

who has been badly wounded, and is expected to arrive every day."

The waiter nodded. He was accustomed to every sort of people, and treated them all exactly in the same manner. So, hurrying down to the bar, he said to the bar-maid, without entering, "Old gentleman—39—parson—son a colonel—anything you like for dinner—soup, fish, chicken—bottle of sherry, I dare say." And off he dashed to attend upon some other guest.

In the meantime, Mr. Haldimand had discovered in the newspaper, under the head of Deal, that "the Lord Clive," East Indiaman, had arrived in the Downs, and thence sailed for London; and his impatience became very great. He was not by nature a very imaginative man; but now he fancied a thousand things likely and unlikely. His son might be already in the capital, or he might even have set out for Haldistow, or he might have landed at Deal and gone across the country. In short, he might

miss him in a dozen ways ; and he began almost to regret that he had quitted his village. There was no help for it, however ; and during the rest of the evening he endured his impatience as best he might.

Early on the following morning he set out for Craig's Court, and sought an interview with Charles Haldimand's agent ; but he gained little information there, and no great encouragement.

“ The Colonel is on board the Clive, certainly,” said Mr. G—— ; “ and I think we should have heard if he had landed in the Downs, though he may, indeed, have done so and cut across the country ; but as to the ship having come up, sir, that is quite impossible with this wind.”

The reader must recollect that there were no steam-tugs in those days. The agent went on to say that he thought there were symptoms of a change of weather, and he would advise Mr. Haldimand to go on to the India House, where the

officers were most likely already in communication with the ship.

To the India House the worthy clergyman went, but with no better success. He met with one of those pert officials who give short answers with an air of importance, and, on the strength of a little brief authority, forget the ordinary courtesies of life. From him, of course, little news was to be obtained. He mentioned casually, however, the Docks ; and thither the anxious father hurried. Some information, but not more satisfactory, was now gleaned ; for he entered into conversation with a good-humoured sailor, who took pains to explain to him that a ship could not get up the river with that wind, but that it would not last long, pointing out various indications of a change of weather which had escaped the rector's attention.

This occupied nearly the whole of that day. The two following days were spent much in the same manner ; but the

last of those two was cheered by a decided change in the weather. On the fourth morning, Mr. Haldimand thought it might be as well to write and inform his friends at Haldistow where he was lodged ; and he then once more set out for the Docks, in high expectation from seeing that a full and favourable gale was still blowing. When he arrived, the ship had not yet been seen ; but it was known that she was making way up the river, and might appear at any moment. He waited, therefore, walking anxiously up and down in all the fever of expectation. He was angry with himself ; for his calm, well-regulated mind had never known such sensations before ; but still he could not repress them. At length, at one o'clock, the Clive was reported as coming round the Reach.

Mr. Haldimand was all eyes ; but, while gazing forth as earnestly as if he could have seen his son upon the deck, some one

touched his arm lightly ; and a voice said—

“ Good morning, reverend sir. You come to cover early.”

Turning sharply round, the rector saw before him a figure which he hardly recognised, though it was that of his nephew, Harry Haldimand ; a large pair of moustachios and a foreign dress having wrought an infinite change in his appearance, and given him a more manly if not a more distinguished, air, than he could formerly boast.

“ Ah, Harry !” exclaimed the old clergyman, after gazing at him for a moment. “ I did not recollect you at first, my dear boy, thus ‘ bearded like the pard.’ When did you return ? Your father has been anxious about you, I hear.”

“ I returned about a week ago,” replied Henry Haldimand, “ landed in the far West, and have made my way slowly to London, improving my mind and gaining information on the road. As to my sweet father, I have not troubled him with many

epistles lately, well knowing that the return was not likely to be satisfactory. I have lived to a great age, as biographers say, and all that time in leading-strings, till, to tell the truth, uncle of mine, they began to gall me. Checked here, and checked there, I have had no scope allowed me to be either great or good, though plenty of room to be as wicked as ever I liked. Having once got from under the excellent paternal rule, however, I have fluttered my wings pretty handsomely over the civilized continent of Europe. Nay, do not look grave, my dear uncle—I have not been fluttering them after the old fashion. I had got tired of vice before I left England; and so I tried something else on the continent. I shall never be a very good man; for nature must have been out of that sort of clay when she made me; yet I can assure you I am in nothing worse, and in some things a little better, than when I went away. But I want to have a good long talk with you."

"By and bye, Harry, we will have one,"

said Mr. Haldimand. “At present, I am all eagerness and anxiety, looking—”

“For Charles,” said his nephew. “I know all about it, beloved uncle; for I have been seeking you in London, traced you from your old inn, where they would not allow you to perch, to your new one, and there heard the whole story—how you were looking for your son, who was a Colonel—and how you came down here daily to see if he had arrived. So hither I followed you, to talk about one or two things, and to be present at the joyful meeting. Have you heard from Haldistow lately?”

“No, not since I have been in town,” replied the clergyman. “I dare say I shall hear to-morrow; for I have written to tell them where I am to be found.”

“A wherry is coming from the ship,” said Henry Haldimand; “and there are a couple of passengers in it, besides a trunk or two.”

Mr. Haldimand gazed eagerly forward,

and then said, in a low and agitated voice,
“I do think it is Charles.”

“Come a little farther on to these stairs,” rejoined his nephew. “As to its being Charles, you cannot at this distance tell whether it is a white man or a negro; but we shall soon see.”

Thus saying, he walked on towards the point for which the boat was evidently making; and gradually, as it approached the shore, the conviction grew more and more strong in the mind of Mr. Haldimand that it contained his son. I wish I could describe his sensations when at last the figure and the face of Charles Haldimand became so distinct as to leave no longer any doubt, and he saw not only that his son was there alive, but sitting upright and firm, like a man in health and strength. Oh, what a flight of visionary fears and sorrows took wing at that moment, and left the happiness of the meeting pure!

Colonel Haldimand sprang on shore; but before he reached it, his father, albeit not

much accustomed to battle with the world, had struggled down through the crowd of boatmen and porters, and was ready to take him in his arms.

It was a joyful meeting, though not untouched with sorrow ; for there was one painful memory in the minds of both, one face wanting to greet Charles Haldimand on his arrival, one void in the heart which never could be filled up.

Charles Haldimand was thinner and looked paler than when he departed, but nevertheless seemed in perfect health, which was one great comfort to his father. “ Ah, Harry,” he exclaimed, as soon as he recognised his cousin, “ you down to meet me too ! This is very kind of you ; but you look as grave and as grim as a sick lion. How is this, Hal ? You used to be the spirit of all merriment. You are not ill, I hope ? If so, you must go to sea for five months. The very first week made me feel quite well ; and by the

end of the fourth, my wounds were all completely healed."

"No, I am not ill," answered Henry. "A slight degree of stiffness about the diaphragm, which prevents me from indulging in any immoderate laughter just now, but no other corporeal infirmity. Come, however, let us speed back to the parson's inn ; and there we will talk at large. We have too much company here."

After giving some directions regarding his baggage on board the ship, and obtaining from the fingers of the custom-house officers the two small trunks he had brought on shore with him, Colonel Haldimand accompanied his father and his cousin to the hotel where Mr. Richard Haldimand was lodged.

"And now we shall all be better for some luncheon," said Harry Haldimand, as soon as they had entered the sitting-room. "I have learned during my travels that eating and drinking are the great objects of human existence—at least are considered so in all

parts of the world. I would not be out of the fashion for a king's crown. So now I have devoted myself to the goddess of gastronomy."

His uncle shook his head, exclaiming, " You are incorrigible, Harry !" But he ordered the luncheon, which was speedily put upon the table. Harry Haldimand, not contented with doing justice to it himself by eating moderately enough, and drinking two or three glasses of wine, pressed his cousin and his uncle hard to do so likewise, in order to keep him in countenance, as he called it. He could only induce the clergyman, however, to take a second glass by drinking a health to his cousin, and a welcome back to England. Seeing that he could do no more, he fell into a fit of thought for two or three minutes while the other two chatted over various matters of personal interest ; and then he said, abruptly, " You do not know that I was down at Haldistow the night before last."

Both started, and gazed at him. Though

always odd in his manners, he had been so much more singular than usual that morning, that Charles Haldimand felt sure something had gone wrong with him ; and the abrupt announcement of his visit to Haldistow instantly created alarm.

“ Well, how is my uncle, and my dear Kate ?” asked the young officer, fixing his eyes upon his cousin’s face to mark the slightest change.

Harry Haldimand did not reply for a moment, and then said, “ Kate is well, I believe and hope. I am sorry to say I cannot give you such good accounts of Sir John.”

Mr. Haldimand started up from the table, with a look of great anxiety. “ Why did you not tell me before, Harry ?” he said. “ Has my brother had a relapse ? I will go down directly.” And he rang the bell.

“ I did not tell you before,” answered Harry Haldimand, slowly, “ because I did not wish to spoil the pleasure of your meet-

ing with Charles. As to a relapse, I never heard that my poor uncle had been ill before."

"Your *poor* uncle!" exclaimed Richard Haldimand. "Tell me, Harry. Tell me at once. Is my brother dead?"

Harry Haldimand slowly inclined his head; and Richard seated himself at the table, covered his eyes with his hands, and wept.

A waiter entered the room in answer to the summons of the bell. Harry Haldimand, whose object all throughout had been to make the blow fall as lightly on his uncle as possible, looked at the man, and said, "Put four horses to Mr. Haldimand's carriage."

"It is not needful now," said the clergyman, looking up. "I can set out later in the day when I have heard the whole facts."

"You had better set out at once," said Harry Haldimand, with a meaning look. Then, turning to the waiter, he added,

“Get the horses. If he does not use them, I will.”

“What is the matter, Harry?” said Colonel Haldimand, almost sternly. “You have something more to tell. Has any other evil chance befallen us?”

“*You* can speak at liberty, Charles,” replied his cousin; “but *I* must weigh every word; and, being very little accustomed to such balancing, I am in some difficulty. Do not alarm yourself needlessly. You will understand my condition when I tell you that my dear, tender-hearted, amiable papa is down at Haldistow in possession of the Hall, and having it all his own way, which is not my way at all.”

“But Kate, but Kate?” exclaimed Colonel Haldimand. “Have you seen her?”

“Yes,” replied his cousin, “I saw her; and she was well, though not very comfortable.”

“Forgive me for saying so, Harry,” said Mr. Haldimand, wiping the tears away from

his eyes and joining in their conversation ; “ but your father has no business at the Hall. I and Mr. Greenshield are the executors under the will.”

“ Ay, but where *is* the will ?” said Harry Haldimand abruptly.

“ It is in the old oak chest in my poor brother’s study,” said Mr. Haldimand at once.

“ No, it is *not* there,” replied his nephew. “ It has been searched for there and everywhere else, and is not to be found.”

Mr. Haldimand gazed with consternation at his nephew, who added, “ I passed through Dingle as I came, and spoke with Bigood the lawyer, who told me he had searched the whole house without discovering the will, and especially that it was not in the old oak chest where he expected to find it.”

“ This is both strange and suspicious,” said Colonel Haldimand.

“ Very strange and very suspicious indeed,” said his cousin ; “ as much so as a

cold meat pie at a stage-coach supper. Neither you nor I, Charles, can tell what is under the crust ; but I am afraid we shall find it bad enough."

"We must go down immediately, my dear father," said Colonel Haldimand, "and remove poor Kate from the Hall till this matter is unravelled."

"That trouble at least has been saved you," said Harry Haldimand, drily. "Kate has been removed already."

"Good Heaven, Harry!" exclaimed Charles Haldimand, vehemently. "Do not keep us in this suspense ! Tell us the whole at once."

"I cannot, dearly beloved," replied his cousin. "All that I have to tell is fragmentary ; for I did not choose to go up and see my father at the Hall, thinking that he had no business there, nor I either. I gleaned what information I could, indeed, both at Halcombe and in the village, and—"

"But Kate, but Kate ?" exclaimed, Colonel Haldimand. "Tell me about her

at least. You say you saw her. Where was it, if you were not at the Hall ? You do not know, Harry, how deeply I am interested in everything relating to her."

" Oh, yes, I do," answered Harry Haldimand ; " but my interview with her was very short ; and it took place at night upon the king's highway. As far as I could understand the facts, my gentle father had contrived to drive her out of Haldistow Hall ; and she was betaking herself to Tom Notbeame's house to get some conveyance to Halcombe."

" And did the old servants, who have known her from her infancy," exclaimed Colonel Haldimand, with a glowing cheek, and a look of indignation ; " did they suffer her thus to be driven from her home at night ? Happy for us all, Harry, that I was not there."

" Very happy," replied Harry Haldimand. " As for the old servants, they were no more to blame for suffering it than the people of the town for not ring-

ing the bells when they had none. They had all been turned out themselves, two or three hours before. My dear daddie made a clear house of it with very great expedition. But hear me out. You bid me tell you all, and yet won't let me go on. I shot one of the fellows who seemed inclined to maltreat poor Kate ; and the other ran away ; but just when I was talking to her, and comforting her, and telling her who I am, as far as I know myself, the other fellow, whom I pistolled, jumped up, and began to scraggle across the heath. I followed him as fast as I could go, but could not come up with him, till he had run to earth. I then went back again, and found that, in the mean time, the dear girl was safely housed at Tom Notbeame's, where there were plenty of people to help and protect her."

"But did you not go in ? Did you not see her again ?" asked Colonel Haldimand, eagerly.

"No," replied Harry. "I am a very

dutiful son, as you know, and unwilling to give the least offence to my revered parent. I therefore thought it better not to meddle farther, when once I knew that she was in safety, but rather to come on here, seek out my dear uncle, and send him down post-haste to mitigate things at the Hall."

"Well, Harry, you are a strange fellow," replied his cousin ; "but a good fellow at heart, I know ; and I thank you most sincerely for what you have done for my poor Kate."

"Don't thank me at all, Charles," replied his cousin. "I did it for my own sake, not for yours, being more bound to protect and assist her than you are—as yet, at least."

"I don't understand you," said Mr. Richard Haldimand, with a bewildered look. "You do not know, Kate promised her hand to Charles before he went to India."

"Oh, yes, I do," answered Harry Haldimand ; "but he is not her husband yet ; and I happen to be her uncle."

A new light seemed to break in a moment upon the mind of Mr. Richard Haldimand. He was very little accustomed to interjections of any kind ; but he could not refrain from exclaiming—

“Good Heaven, and I never suspected this !”

“But her mother, her mother ?” exclaimed Colonel Haldimand.

“Her mother was my poor sister Emily,” replied Harry Haldimand, with a far graver and more melancholy expression than was at all customary with him. “You must recollect poor Emily, Charles ?”

“But very faintly,” replied Colonel Haldimand. “I was very young at the time of her death.”

“So was I,” replied his cousin ; “but I shall never forget her. I can bring her up before my eyes in a moment, with the tears upon her eyelashes just as she held me to her heart on the morning of that day when she left my father’s house for ever, and bade me remember her, and

love her. I have always done so, and shall always love her child also. I do not wish to quarrel with my father ; yet, if need be, in *her* cause I would quarrel with a king upon his throne."

" But are you sure, Harry, are you quite sure ?" asked Mr. Richard Haldimand.

" I am not very sure of my own existence," answered his nephew, " but quite as sure that Kate is my niece as that I am Harry Haldimand. When last I was at Haldistow, I traced the whole matter out. I went to Dingle, stood in the very room where my poor sister dwelt in poverty, saw the register of the child's baptism, saw several scraps of Emily's own hand-writing in possession of the people of the house—ay, and her very book of accounts, terminating on the day when she went to join her husband abroad, and found it the same day as that on which Kate was placed under my uncle's protection."

" Ah, my poor brother," said the clergyman, with a deep sigh, " how people calumniated you !"

“ And none more than his own brother,” replied Harry Haldimand ; “ but, if my father has, from the papers at the Hall, made the discovery of who Kate is, be you sure that, in the words of the prophet, ‘ the plague has begun.’ It is in his own heart ere this, I doubt not ; for, although he hardened himself with regard to Emily, and would fain believe, and make others believe, that he never regrets his cruel treatment of her, yet I have often seen that the memory of her sad fate is the black and bitter drop which poisons and dis-colours the whole cup of life for him. You had better go down, my dear uncle, and Charles too ; but, for Heaven’s sake, remember that he is my father ; and, in regard to Kate, do not forget, Charles, what I tell you, that from the moment when he discovers who she is, his own heart will reproach him for his conduct towards her more than you can. As for myself, I shall not be far from you ; but I would rather not be an actor in the scene

if I can help it ; and therefore I will not go with you. So now good bye. I have been a messenger of sad and evil tidings ; and I have suspicions, the truth of which I will know before I have done. It may be a bitter task I have to perform ; but I will do it or die."

Thus saying, without waiting for any farther questions, he took up his hat and left his companions.

CHAPTER XI.

“I must go to London and get money for this, Bill,” said Matthew Hush to his friend and companion, Farmer Bagshot, a few minutes after the son of the latter had put into his hand Sir William Haldimand’s cheque for a thousand pounds, carefully enveloped in half a sheet of paper and sealed.

He neither perceived nor cared for the presence of the boy, who was in so hopeful a state of progress towards the same point of villainy which he had himself reached, that it was very little use having any concealments from him. Mr. Hush, however, committed one indiscretion—a

very rare occurrence with him—in giving notice to Bill Bagshot of his intention to depart; for his worthy host was at that moment in a very irritable and suspicious mood, rolling about in bed with a fiery pain in his right shoulder, in which careful examination would have shown what is called a gun-shot wound, whether inflicted by a gun or a pistol, very deep and very much inflamed.

“ If I let you go before I get my hundred pound, I’ll be ——,” said Farmer Bagshot, adding an alternative which was very likely to befall him sooner or later, whether he suffered his worthy companion to depart or not.

Now the threat was not likely, in Matthew Hush’s opinion, to prove any great impediment; for Farmer Bagshot was by no means as strong a man as he had been four and twenty hours before; and there was nobody else in the house but the boy and two women, the servants on the farm being all day-labourers. The eyes of the

boy, indeed, were fixed upon his face with a very enquiring look ; and it is probable that the astute young gentleman read clearly what was passing in Mr. Hush's mind ; for, after a momentary glance at his father, he said :

“ I don't think you can manage to go, Mr. Hush, whether father lets you or not ; for somehow or another there are people watching all round the house--I thought they would have stopped me.”

“ The devil there are !” exclaimed Farmer Bagshot, raising himself on his elbow. “ It's that damn'd fellow who shot me in the shoulder, and then chased me all across the common. I'll be even with him for his pains. He can't say I hurt the young woman, or was going to hurt her ; and, if you had not run away like a coward, we'd have had her here now, and pitched him into the Mere. Hadn't we got up the story all right about her being mad and going to make away with herself, so that we need not have minded who came ?”

“I tell you, Bill,” replied Matthew Hush, emphatically ; “the man who shot you, is one who knows me, if any one does ; and I would not fallin to his hands for twice the value of this.” And he held up the cheque.

“You look devilish white about the gills,” said farmer Bagshot, staring at him by the light of the tallow candle.

“It ain’t he,” said the boy. “He stopped half an hour in Haldistow, and then went on to Lunnun the same night.”

“Then who the devil is it ?” asked his father.

“Ay,” said the boy, mysteriously, “I don’t know who it is ; but there’s a man here and a man there : a man in the lane before the house, and a man just opposite the gates of the yard, and a man behind at the back, and another just over at the end of Five Acres Close towards the common ; and they keep whistling to each other all round. They are all people I’ve seen about with Tom Notbeame, anyhow ;

and I've a notion he's at the bottom of it, though he's not there hisself."

Both Matthew Hush and his companion mused over this information ; but at length, Farmer Bagshot muttered in a low voice—

"Tom's not after me, that's clear."

"He may be after *me*," said the admirable Matthew, with a sneering smile ; "but, poor man, he'll find himself mistaken. He has already burnt his fingers with that search-warrant ; and he'll burn them worse now, if he doesn't mind."

"Why, suppose he finds the will upon you, Master Hush," said Farmer Bagshot. "That would hang you I fancy."

"That's all a supposition of your own Bill," replied his friend, boldly. "I never told you I had the will upon me. You don't suppose me a fool, do you ? I'll tell you what, Bill. There's no hanging in the matter. I shouldn't mind opening the door and telling Master Tom to search wherever he pleases. The only thing that stops

me is this job about the young lady, and you lying wounded there."

"As to that," said Farmer Bagshot, who, to tell the truth, did not believe in the reality of Hush's boldness, "the story we cooked up is good against a hundred. We saw the young lady by the side of the Mere, thought she had gone mad and was going to throw herself in, tried to stop her and take her away home, when up comes this fellow and blazes away at us. If anything bad happens, it is *his* fault; and this hole in my shoulder is his fault too; and I'll make him smart for it before I've done."

"You will not take things in a comprehensive way," said Matthew Hush, philosophically. "What you saw is all very true, as far as it goes; but you don't consider how such investigations would stop all my proceedings; and besides, Bill, when once enquiries begin, there is no knowing where they may end. I fancy there is a thing or two that neither

you nor I would like to come out. You had better, a great deal, get your wound healed ; and if you would make the young man pay for it, take it out with crab-thorn ; but have nothing to do with law. The less you and I have to do with law, the better."

Farmer Bagshot grumbled something to himself ; and, after a moment's pause of consideration, the excellent Matthew resumed—

" Well, I'll stay here quite comfortably to-night ; and shan't sleep the worse for the house being well-guarded, though I think it would be just as well to ask the gentlemen in, and let them search with our good leave and consent."

" No ! d——n me if they do !" exclaimed Farmer Bagshot, starting up in bed. " I'll have none of those fellows here. I'm strong enough still to send any two of them spinning." But the next moment he sank back again, with a low groan and an expression of pain. " I say, Mat," he continued,

in a faint tone ; “I must have that hundred pound, you know. It was no fault of mine we didn’t get hold of the girl. So the bargain is good.”

“I never said it was not,” replied Matthew Hush ; “and the hundred pound you shall have ; but I must get this money first. You don’t suppose I’m a man to have a hundred pounds ready in my pocket?”

“Well, I’ll have it,” muttered Mr. Bagshot, between his teeth. “I’ll have it, or I’ll blow the whole, and spoil your game.”

Matthew Hush smiled slightly ; for he was a man very confident in his own resources, and did not at all believe that it was in the power of his worthy companion to spoil any game which he chose to play.

Farmer Bagshot, with his keen black eyes, marked the smile ; and, reading it not far wrong, thought he might as well throw in an inducement of another kind.

“Ay, ay,” he said, “you’ve got more money with you than you choose to own,

Mat. You've not been serving old Sir John hard upon two years for nothing ; and I'll tell you what. If you choose to pay up handsome, I can show you a way out, so that these fellows can't stop you."

The eyes of Matthew Hush twinkled ; for he had, all his life, been fully alive to the great advantages of a way out, and had been most careful to prepare one, in all the various operations which he had conducted. He did not choose, indeed, to confess the fact to his worthy associate ; for there is no real confidence between bad men ; and he replied coolly,

" It would never do for me to be hiding away, Bill. You know, what I have got to do requires me to be walking about quite free ; otherwise your namesake, Sir Billy, would think he had got the whip hand of me, and refuse to come down. As to the money, you shall have it when I can get it. I have not got more than five-and-twenty pounds that I could spare."

A wrangle now took place, of no other

interest than the mere exhibition of the low and pitiful cunning so often exhibited by two rogues in their dealings with each other. Hush strove to conceal, as far as possible, his desire to know the means of escape from the house, unstopped and unquestioned, which Bagshot mentioned, and yet to obtain the information ; and Bagshot, clearly perceiving his anxiety, endeavoured to extract as high a price for that information as he could get. Matters of business are always more difficult to settle with rogues than with honest men ; and the discussion which ensued lasted nearly half-an-hour. In the end, however, an arrangement was effected. Hush agreed to pay his worthy friend fifty pounds at once, and to give an I. O. U. for the remainder ; and, upon that consideration, the farmer directed his son to show their worthy guest the way out by the barns, and down what he called the Pheasant Walk. But he would not suffer the boy to reveal the secrets of the prison-house, till he had got the money in his hand.

Matthew Hush, however, paid it, declaring all the time, that he had no intention whatever of using this means of escape, unless things began to look ill ; and he talked so confidently about having nothing to fear, except for the affair with Miss Haldimand, that even Bagshot himself felt half inclined to believe him, and began to suspect that he really had not the will in the house, although he might know where it was concealed.

At length, after having tenderly applied vinegar and salt—a famous poacher's remedy—to his companion's wound, which, I need not say, put him to exquisite torture without doing him the slightest good, and having rather enjoyed his writhings under the operation than otherwise, Mr. Hush, accompanied by the worthy youth, went down stairs to receive the promised information. A door through the back kitchen led into a sort of shed, which again communicated with the barn, and with an outhouse beyond. The farther

end of that outhouse abutted upon a small kitchen-garden, with a door exactly opposite a little narrow alley, fenced off from the garden by two thick hornbeam hedges, which left space enough for a man to walk between, but no more. At the end of this again came a long hedgerow, separating two fields, and appearing, from either side, nothing but a thick and solid hedge. Along the middle of it, however, was continued the same path which had just passed through the hornbeams ; and stopping at the end, the boy pointed it out, saying, in a whisper—

“ That’s what we call the Pheasant’s Walk. It’ll take you up full half a mile, and out into the meadow just under the great Haldistow copse. Then a man’s safe enough ; but you must push through the holly bush at the end before you can get out.”

“ I should like to go on and see,” said Matthew Hush, in a low tone, taking a step forward at the same time.

But the boy caught him eagerly by the arm.

“No, don’t ye,” he said. “You’ll get your feet in the wires ; and it will cost me an hour or more to set them again.”

“Ho, ho!” ejaculated Hush—“I understand.” And, without more ado, he turned round with the boy, and walked back again to the house.

“Now, Bill,” said he, as they entered the parlour, “don’t you think you can get me that bottle of rum, and some sugar and hot water ?”

“I dare say I can,” replied the boy. “It’s your rum, ain’t it ?”

“To be sure,” replied Hush. “I gave you the money for it myself.”

“Well, then, I’ll go and filch father’s keys and get it for you,” replied the boy.

Young Bill’s notions of honesty were somewhat refined and curious. However, he went away to his father’s room, and while talking to him quietly about other things, con-

trived to get his keys out of his pocket without being detected. With these he soon procured the rum and the sugar. The maid supplied hot water ; and the boy himself carried in two tumblers.

“ Oh, ho!” exclaimed Mr. Hush, when he perceived them, “ so you calculate upon having a drop too, do you ?”

“ To be sure,” replied the boy, laughing. “ You don’t think I’d go and get the keys for nothing.”

“ But what will your father say, you young dog ?” demanded Hush.

“ Oh, never mind father,” replied the boy. “ He’s safe enough for the next week.” And two stout glasses of rum-and-water were immediately concocted.

The boy’s was emptied fully as soon as Mr. Hush’s ; and after a moment’s pause, he said, in a wheedling tone—

“ Come, give us another, Mr. Hush. You won’t miss it.”

“ Why, you little devil, you’ll get drunk,” replied Hush, who, in reality, was not at all

unwilling that the consummation which he appeared to deprecate should be arrived at.

“No, I sha’n’t,” replied the boy. “I hav’n’t been drunk this month ; and if you don’t give me some, I shall go and get some of father’s ; and that will be stealing, you know—at least he says so. I may take anybody else’s I like ; but I mustn’t take *his*—for that’s stealing, he says.”

“Why, your father told me he had no more in the house,” said Hush, replenishing the youth’s glass with another strong dose.

“Oh, that’s all my eye,” answered the boy. “He told you so, because he thought the dollar had better come out of your pocket than his. He’s got lots of bottles in there.”

That glass was soon discussed and another demanded ; but Hush, knowing the power of dissuasion in making certain persons go on, shook his head gravely, saying—

“ You’ll have a devil of a headache to-morrow, I can tell you, young man.”

“ Not a bit of it,” replied the boy, stoutly. “ I’ve been drunk nineteen times, and never had a headache in all my life.”

“ You’re a lucky dog,” said Hush ; and he pushed the bottle over to him, to help himself. The boy took care to be liberal in point of quantity ; and, before he had got half through his third glass, Hush perceived by unmistakeable signs that he was approaching the state to which he wished him reduced. There is, however, a stage in the progress of inebriation which may be called the noisy stage, and which Master Hush wished to cut as short as possible.

“ I’ll tell you what, my boy,” he said—“ you’re getting drunk ; and, if you’ll take my advice, you’ll have a glass of beer to settle your stomach and your head, and let the rum alone.”

“ I’m not drunk,” said the boy. “ I’m

as sober as the parson. It's devilish odd of you, however, having three candles on the table." And he rubbed his eyes with his hands to make sure that he saw distinctly. "I don't mind having the beer," he continued, "for I'm devilish thirsty. I'll go and get it, and just look after the governor too." And he strove to rise and stand straight.

"Deuce take it, don't do that," cried Hush, forcing him down into the chair again. "He'll smell you out in a minute. I'll get you the beer; and, when you've got that, you'll be quite steady; for I'm sure your head's going round now."

"No, it isn't," said the boy; "but the room is; and I think that devilish odd, and not fair."

He remained on his seat, however; and Hush, going out into the kitchen, asked one of the maids to bring him a glass of strong beer.

"Master Bill wants too much of the

rum," he said, quietly ; " and I think a glass of beer will be better for him."

" It is a shame to see how that boy goes on," said the poor woman. " He's as bad as any man, or worse."

" Men are not such bad creatures," said Mr. Hush, smiling ; " but get me the beer, there's a good girl, or he'll be at the rum while I'm away."

" Better give him small beer," said the girl.

" He'll not drink it," replied Hush.

" Likely enough," said she ; and away she went, and brought the ale.

When Hush returned with it to the parlour, he found the half glass of rum-and-water no longer apparent, and young Bill Bagshot lolling back in his chair, attempting to sing one of his favourite songs, which had a burden of " Tol de rol de rol." The effort was not very successful ; and, the beer having been placed in his grasp, he lifted it more steadily than might have

been expected, saying—for he had quite got to the loquacious stage—“Here’s to your health, you jolly old covey, and all your pals.”

His oratory was soon cut short, however. Three more glasses of rum-and-water would hardly have produced the same effect as that one glass of ale, taken after the spirits he had already drunk.

“It’s not so good,” he stammered, setting down the glass, “as the—” But the comparison was wanting; for the boy’s head lolled over to one side; and he began slipping off the chair in a state of semi-apoplexy.

“Ha, my boy, so you are sewed up,” said Hush; and, taking him in his arms, he carried him to the room opposite, which was that in which the lad slept, cast him down upon the bed, and left him to revive at leisure. Then carefully blowing out the candles, of which two, and not three, were upon the table, he retired to his own room, and proceeded quietly to make various little arrangements, which he thought necessary.

He waited patiently, up and dressed, till about twelve o'clock, and then, opening his door, listened.

Everything was quiet, except the low moaning of the wounded man, proceeding from the adjoining chamber, and uttered probably through broken and feverish sleep. Mr. Hush stood for a moment and considered. He asked himself whether it would be possible to steal quietly into Bill Bagshot's room and possess himself of the fifty pounds he had paid him a short time before. He weighed the hazard nicely against the satisfaction, and decided upon resigning himself to the loss. When this was settled, and he had made himself quite sure that no one was stirring in the house, he returned to his room, put his black leather case under his arm, took up the candle, and descended to the lower floor. There he met with no interruption, nor heard any sound but that from the boy's nose, as he lay on his bed snoring like a whale. Proceeding to the

back kitchen, Hush found the door locked but the key in it. The same was the case with the door leading into the shed ; and Hush said to himself, with a smile, “ That ‘cute boy would have had these keys out if I had not given him a good night-cap. Drinking is a bad habit for a youth breeding up to his father’s profession. It was always Bill’s own fault too, or he might have been a very great man.”

Thus moralising on the vices of his friends, he proceeded through the shed, the barn, and the outhouse, carrying the candle in his hand. After having unlocked the door which led into the garden, he blew out the light, which indeed he no longer wanted ; for the moon was now shining brightly without, and peeping through the shrubs, already half stripped of their leaves. The air was fresh and invigorating ; and, being a little heated by the rum-and-water which he had drunk, Mr. Hush felt all its reviving and pleasant influence just as much as if he had been the most honest man in the world.

Down between the hornbeams he went, and into the Pheasant's Walk, with a quiet and noiseless step. He seldom forgot any precaution ; but he did forget one in the present instance ; and, at the end of about fifty paces, his right foot was suddenly arrested in his progress, and he was thrown forward on his face with a tremendous fall, his ankle having been caught in one of the boy's springes.

Rising and picking up his leather case, he cursed Bill Bagshot, and his son, and his wires very heartily ; and then, disentangling his foot, he proceeded with greater caution, which hardly saved him more than once from another catastrophe. At length, however, he reached the holly-bush at the end of the walk ; and, pressing gently against it till he could see what was beyond, he looked carefully around. Nothing was visible, but the narrow green field sleeping in the moonlight and the amphitheatre of trees, shadowy and mysterious, forming Haldistow great copse. Master Hush knew the locality per-

fectly well ; and, satisfied that he was beyond the line of watchers, and safe from pursuit, he pushed his way through the holly-bush, and jumped down into the meadow. He then took his course quickly towards the copse. But suddenly a sound caught his ear ; and, turning his head, he saw two men running after him as fast as they could go. Hush was thin, active, and light of foot, however ; and, darting forward like a shot, he reached the copse, leapt the fence and plunged in amongst the trees and bushes.

CHAPTER XII.

THERE was a time in London when, from the General Post Office in a narrow street in the City, set out every evening a number of small and inconvenient vehicles, called mail-coaches, conveying passengers and letters towards all parts of England. Contracted was the space allowed to each traveller in the inside. If he were very tall or very broad, his tortures were certain to be equally great, unless, as sometimes happened, he had at least one half the vehicle to himself. These coaches, however, had their con-

venience as well as their inconvenience. They were not altogether without decoration, either. Besides the arms of Majesty and the title of "Royal Mail," they had each a coachman and a guard trimmed out in scarlet ; and, what was more to the purpose with a traveller, had each of them four swift and beautiful horses attached, which whirled them over most of the highways at the rate of at least ten miles in the hour, stoppages included. Now, the utmost that a postchaise could do, except in case of an elopement or a duel, was seven or eight miles in the same space of time, and of those the wayfarer could not be very certain.

Relying upon this extraordinary celerity, Harry Haldimand, as he placed himself in one of these vehicles two or three hours after his uncle and cousin had set off post from London, hugged himself with the idea that he should be in the neighbourhood of Haldistow at least as many hours before them.

The mail dashed away in a westerly direction with nobody in it but the one passenger we have mentioned. It was by lamp-light that it started; and many an hour of darkness had yet to run before the fair face of nature was likely to appear again. Harry Haldimand accordingly settled himself comfortably to sleep, but was not very successful in the endeavour. He had plenty to occupy his mind; the horses of the mail-coach were changed frequently; and every time his eyes began to feel an inclination to doze during the first three stages, he was woken up with a start by the coach coming suddenly to a stand-still. At length, however, he slept; and how long he had remained asleep when he was roused again, he did not know; but he found the horses being rapidly changed at an inn door, and by the light of the ostler's lantern, saw a post-chaise drawn up close to the mail, apparently just arrived by a road which branched away to the south.

The ostler opened the door of the mail, holding up his lantern, and saying,

“ Any room inside ?”

“ Plenty,” replied Harry Haldimand, though the question was probably not intended for him ; and a gentleman, wrapped in a large, heavy coat, got into the vehicle and took his seat.

All that Harry Haldimand could see of his outward form was that it seemed that of a powerful man of the middle age ; and as he moved easily and lightly, he concluded that his new companion was rather at the youthful end of that somewhat indefinite period than at the other. The traveller leaned back in the carriage ; and in a minute after, the mail dashed forward on the road again.

For some few moments he seemed buried in that state of deep thought which very often precedes the absence of all thought ; and Harry Haldimand, who was in no mood for making new acquaintances, though it was a habit in which he was fond of indulging,

was addressing himself to sleep again when the voice of the stranger was suddenly heard, saying,

“The mail reaches Dingle at twelve o’clock, I believe?”

“One,” replied Harry Haldimand.

Both were silent for a minute or two; and then the stranger inquired,

“Does it go on to Halcombe?”

“The mail does, but the coach does not,” answered his companion. “The bag is put upon the croup of a horse, and fixed on either to the saddle or to the posterior part of a boy in a blue jacket; and thus it jogs on to Halcombe and various places in the neighbourhood. I have seen the operation more than once.”

“Umph!” said the stranger. “May I ask if you have been in that neighbourhood lately?”

“Very lately,” replied Harry Haldimand. “I have only spent twelve hours in London since I left it.”

“Then Sir John Haldimand must have been dead before you went?”

“ Both before I came and before I went,” answered Harry, drily.

“ And his brother, Sir William, is installed in the Hall?” rejoined the stranger.

“ Exactly so,” answered Henry Haldimand, who, though his curiosity was a little excited, felt the subject an unpleasant one, and was resolved to change it. “ Pray, can you tell me,” he added, “ how goes the night? for I have been asleep, I do not know how long.”

“ I will tell you exactly, in a moment,” replied the stranger, taking a watch from his pocket, and pressing a spring which immediately produced the clear ringing sound of a repeater. “ It wants something of a quarter to four,” he said. “ The coach is rather late. It should have been at Bush’s corner, where I got in, before half past three. Had it been so, however, I should have missed it, and been obliged to post on, which would have thrown me later still.”

“Bush’s Corner!” exclaimed Harry Haldimand. “Have I not heard some story of that place?”

“Very probably,” answered his companion. “It takes its name from a sad but not uncommon incident. I can recollect when a gallows stood before the house just on the opposite side of the way.”

“I recollect it too, now you’ve mentioned it,” replied Harry Haldimand; “but that is more than twenty years ago. May I ask for whose benefit it was erected?”

“For that of a gentleman named Bush,” replied the stranger, “who there paid the forfeit of his life, nearly two-and-twenty years ago.”

“A highwayman, I suppose?” said Harry Haldimand.

“Oh, no,” replied the other, “a gentleman of good family and a tolerable fortune. The inn was at that time a great posting-house, and the place where many convivial meetings of the county were held. One night this Bush was there with his

brother-in-law; and they both drank deeply. It seems that the party was a somewhat noisy and quarrelsome one; so that the host, upon more occasions than one, was obliged to interfere.

Here one was crying out, 'By Jove!'
Another, 'Fight me in the grove.'
This wounds a friend, and that the trees;
The lion's temper reign'd in these:

as Parnell says. The brothers-in-law quarrelled; and very bitter words passed between them in their intoxication. Bush was a savage, morose fellow, especially when he was drunk; but the other, whose name was Mainwairing, was of a more pliable and amiable temper, easily appeased; and before they parted for the night, instead of fighting his brother-in-law on the spot, as the other wanted, he held out his hand to him. Bush would not take it, and retired moodily, going as every one supposed, to bed.

The next morning, however, Mainwairing was found dead on the floor of his room, with a sword-wound through the body. The furniture was in great confusion, as if there had been a struggle in the room; and it would appear that, in the strife which must have taken place, the brothers-in-law had changed swords, like Hamlet and Laertes; for Bush's weapon was found unsheathed and bloody by Mainwairing's side; and Mainwairing's sword was in Bush's room, where the murderer was apprehended the next morning, fast asleep in his bed. The case was clearly proved, and the man executed, as was customary at that time, as near as possible to the spot where the murder was committed. He died sullen and impenitent, without either confession or denial of his guilt. His crime was productive of great misery; for his sister, Mainwairing's wife, was suddenly reduced from affluence to great poverty. She was a woman, gentle, delicate, and tender, but with a firm mind and a strong

heart; and she commenced and carried on the struggle with the world at a period of life when most people are seeking to retire from it. A widowed daughter-in-law with an infant child went with her from the home, which had once been a most happy one, to hide themselves from the eyes of those who had fed upon them in prosperity and were most likely to scorn them in distress.

‘Together, thus they shunn’d the cruel scorn
Which virtue, sunk to poverty, would meet
From giddy passion and low-minded pride :
Almost on Nature’s common bounty fed,
Like the gay birds that sung them to repose.’ ”

“ You seem to be well acquainted with the facts,” said Henry Haldimand, in a very grave tone.

“ I am,” replied the other.

Both sank into silence again ; and the conversation was only occasionally renewed;

but Henry Haldimand slept no more that night.

“It seems to me we are going very slowly,” he said at length.

“We are going up hill,” replied his companion, who was as sleepless as himself. “Rapidity of locomotion is a sort of passion with an Englishman. He is for ever pressing forward as fast as he can go.”

“Surely a Frenchman is as brisk and rapid an animal,” said Henry Haldimand.

“Perhaps more so,” answered the other. “A Frenchman is like a swallow, skimming hither and thither and catching whatever he can, though it be but flies after all. An Englishman darts on like a falcon after its prey, keeping it ever in sight and stretching every muscle to attain it. If you had ever gone on mules over the Andes or travelled dauk in India, you would not think the coach was going slow, even now; and yet perhaps I am as eager to get to my journey’s end as you are.”

“Probably so,” replied Henry Haldimand; and again the conversation dropped.

At length a slight change was observed in the air. A faint grey light rendered the objects at the side of the road indistinctly visible ; and Henry Haldimand turned round and looked towards his companion’s face. The features, however, could not yet be seen, and the younger gentleman relapsed into thought again and fixed his eyes on the opposite side of the carriage. He suffered the light to grow brighter and brighter for the next ten minutes before he looked round again ; and then he found the stranger’s eyes directed towards himself. Their looks met ; and there was no glance of recognition in his companion’s face ; but Henry Haldimand at once laid his hand upon his arm, and said, “ Do you not recollect me ?”

“ Not in the least,” replied the stranger ; “ and I rarely forget a face with which I have once been well acquainted.”

“ My name is Henry Haldimand. That surely must awaken recollection.”

“ It does,” answered the stranger, with a deep sigh. “ I have only seen you twice since your boyhood ; and then it was at too great a distance to distinguish your features ; but I trace the likeness now.” And he put his hands before his eyes, and seemed buried in bitter thought.

“ But you have avoided me,” said Harry Haldimand, as the carriage rolled into a small town where they were again to change horses.

“ Assuredly,” answered the other. “ Could you suppose it would be otherwise ?”

“ I don’t see why you should avoid me,” replied Harry Haldimand.

“ It matters not now,” answered the other. “ I avoid no one any more. I am going to confront him who has made my life wretched, who crushed me in poverty in my youth, and has rendered bitter a long period of prosperity, taken from existence all its sweetness, and rendered it objectless.

and desolate, and solitary. I go to meet him with all the stern and bitter memories of two and twenty years as vivid in my mind as if each dark and savage deed was but the act of yesterday."

"Remember, remember," said Harry Haldimand, in a voice that trembled with emotion, "remember who he is, and what. I may say to you, as I have had to say to others, the plague in his heart has begun. From circumstances that you do not know, I can tell you that remorse and anguish the most terrible are either preying upon him already or soon will do so. Add not, I beseech you, by your reproaches, however just, to what he must suffer ; and remember, you are not altogether without blame. I would fain beseech you not to harden his heart, not to cast him back upon his pride, even by presenting yourself to his eyes."

"That cannot be, sir," answered the stranger, sternly. "I have a duty to perform ; and it shall be done fearlessly.

Neither do I admit that I have been to blame. My own heart acquits me ; and I have striven that its decision should be unbiassed. But do not misunderstand me. I seek not, I do not intend, to aggravate anything your father may suffer by one reproach, by one reference to the past. I have endured too much mental anguish myself in life to inflict the same on others. I trust, too, I am a Christian, and can forgive. Unless your parent recognises me as you have done, which perhaps he may not, he need never know who I am ; but I can spare him no farther ; for justice and duty require me to act decidedly in the circumstances in which he has placed himself ; and I will shrink from no consequences in doing so."

"Hush ! We must talk more hereafter," said Henry Haldimand, as the door of the mail was opened to admit another traveller while the horses were being changed. "You are not aware of all the circumstances yet. You had better hear them from me than from others."

His companion quietly inclined his head ; and an old lady took her seat in the mail, with a basket on her knee, containing a green parrot which screamed all the way to Dingle, with the exception of interludes of very profane swearing, in which art some blasphemous sailor had made the poor bird a sad proficient.

The arrival of a mail coach in a country town was, at the time I speak of, an object of great interest ; and not only would the usual crowd of ragged boys and girls gather round it as it drove up to the inn, but solicitors' and bankers' clerks, and even sometimes solicitors and bankers themselves together with respectable tradesmen or their shopmen would come up to see whether the vehicle brought any packets for them from the metropolis. Such was the case on the present occasion ; and a little crowd was gathered round the door of the Silver Cross, some with open mouths, and all with open eyes. The stranger was next to the door that was to be

opened ; and without giving the *pas* to the old lady with the parrot, he sprang out at once, saying to the ostler—

“ A chaise and four directly for Haldistow.”

“ Stay, stay a moment,” said Henry Haldimand, following him. “ We must have at least half an hour’s conversation first. There is more to be done than you imagine.”

“ Dear me, Mr. Greenshield,” said the banker of the place, walking up to the stranger, and bowing low. “ Very happy to see you again amongst us, sir. I have not been able to complete the investment of the ten thousand pounds which you were pleased to leave in our hands, as per mine of the twenty-fourth ultimo ; but—”

“ Greenshield !” exclaimed Harry Haldimand, in a low voice. “ Now I understand.”

“ Mr. Greenshield, I am very happy to see you, sir,” said Bigood, the solicitor. “ I must have a few minutes’ conversation

with you immediately, if you please. I was in great hopes that Mr. Richard Haldimand would have been down by this mail. But you will do as well, or perhaps better, as a man of business."

"Mr. Richard Haldimand is now upon the road," said Harry, who was standing near. "He will be down in two or three hours at farthest."

The lawyer bowed stiffly, saying,

"Thank you, sir." And then, turning to Mr. Greenshield, he added—"We had better have a consultation altogether before you proceed to Haldistow. I have taken a responsibility upon myself in regard to the retention of a certain key, from which I would fain be relieved as soon as possible."

"I will see you before I go, but cannot wait for Mr. Haldimand's arrival," said Mr. Greenshield. "In half an hour, I will be with you, Mr. Bigood.—Now, Henry." And, taking his fellow-traveller's arm, he walked into the inn.

The horses were countermaned for the time ; and Mr. Greenshield and Harry Haldimand took refuge in a private room, where their conversation was too earnest and too eager to be interrupted by any of the noises going on in the street. The landlord thought it very strange they did not order any refreshment, nor take part of the mail-coach dinner ; and, feeling for their wants more than they seemed to do themselves, he ventured to open the door to make enquiries regarding their abstinence. They had been there nearly a quarter of an hour ; but they were both still standing and conversing so eagerly, that at first they did not hear the intruder.

“ I will take you to the very house,” said Henry Haldimand in the landlord’s hearing. “ I will remove every doubt.”

At that moment, Mr. Greenshield, whose face was turned towards the door, waved his hand for the landlord to retire ; and the man went out and shut the door.

About twenty minutes after, however,

he went up again and knocked, hearing the voices of those within still speaking earnestly.

“Come in,” said some one, in an impatient tone ; and the landlord entered, saying, reverentially :

“Beg pardon for disturbing you, sir ; but here is Mr. Notbeame, the landlord of the Haldimand Arms, has just come in, hearing from your servant who took down the portmanteau that you had arrived ; and he wishes to speak to you immediately on business of life and death.”

“Let him come in,” said Mr. Greenshield and Henry Haldimand together, though the former added, almost immediately :

“I do not know how he can help us, and may interrupt us.”

“He can help us much,” replied Henry Haldimand, “by telling us where Kate is to be found ; for she was at his house when I came away, but of course could not remain there.”

In the meanwhile the landlord had de-

parted to introduce our friend, Tom Notbeame ; and that good man was up the stairs in a moment. When he beheld Mr. Greenshield in companionship with Henry Haldimand, however, he made a dead stop, and exclaimed : “ Oh !” But though eagerness was very evidently written on his countenance, he said no more.

“ Well, Tom,” said Mr. Greenshield, “ what is your news ?”

“ Little enough,” said Tom Notbeame, in his laconic way ; and then paused again.

The laconic fit was evidently coming upon him ; and, in order to dispel it, Mr. Greenshield rejoined :

“ You may speak freely, Tom. Mr. Haldimand and I perfectly understand each other.”

“ I can’t speak freely,” said Tom Notbeame, “ never could.”

“ This is provoking,” said Mr. Greenshield, “ for a man to lose his tongue just at the moment it is most needed.”

“ Ay,” answered Tom Notbeame. “ Many

a man ties a knot with his tongue that he cannot unloose with his teeth ; and many a woman too, for that matter.”

It was the longest sentence he had spoken yet. There were some hopes of him ; and Harry Haldimand enquired :

“ Where shall we find Miss Kate Haldimand, Tom ? Tell us that, at least.”

“ Ay, who knows ?” said Tom Notbeame.

“ You ought to know, certainly,” replied Harry Haldimand ; “ for, when last I heard of her, she was in your house on the night she went away from the Hall.”

“ That she never was,” answered Tom, warming with the subject. “ She never came to my house at all. Her girl, Susan, came enquiring after her, and went into the parlour and told the man that she could not find her mistress ; but the dear young lady herself did not come.”

Harry Haldimand was about to speak somewhat eagerly ; but Mr. Greenshield touched him on the arm, as a hint to let the man go on his own way ; and Tom proceeded, saying :

“ The men set out all over the place to seek her ; for it was not till the next morning that they found all the blood down by the side of the Mere, close by the waterfall, and believed she was murdered.”

“ Good God ! ” exclaimed Mr. Greenshield, his face becoming as pale as death.

“ Stay, stay,” said Harry Haldimand. “ That is the blood of the man I shot. She is safe, depend upon it. But I do not understand this story. As I was riding from Halcombe, Notbeame, towards this place, on a hired horse, I found two men, one of whom I know, striving to draw Miss Haldimand, apparently, across the moor. She resisted, and screamed loud enough, I am sure, to be heard at your house.”

“ I was ten miles off,” said Tom Notbeame.

“ Well, but listen,” said Henry Haldimand. “ One of the men ran away as soon as I came near. The other kept his hold, and threatened to knock my brains out.”

So I shot him. While I was talking with Miss Haldimand, he got up again and ran away ; and I chased him for three-quarters of a mile, I dare say. When I came back, I went to your house and asked a boy I saw in the passage, if Miss Haldimand had come there—Stay—I recollect : I asked if a young lady had come there ; and he said ‘Yes, she was talking with the servants in the parlour.’”

“That must have been Susan,” said Tom Notbeame. “He would call her a young lady, sure enough. Jack’s very civil.”

“That may be so, indeed,” said Harry Haldimand, thoughtfully, while the countenance of Mr. Greenshield fell, and lost the relieved expression which it had lately assumed.

“Now, sir,” said Notbeame, addressing the younger gentleman, “just have the kindness to tell me one thing. You knew one of the men, you said. Was he Matthew Hush ?”

“I will not positively swear,” said Harry Haldimand, “but I think so.”

“Was he the man you shot?” asked Tom Notbeame.

“No,” replied Harry Haldimand, “another man, tall and broad-shouldered.”

“Bill Bagshot,” replied he of the Haldimand Arms, in a musing tone. “They know where she is, I’ll bet; and more reason we should get hold of them.—I wish I could tell a story as you can, sir; but I can’t. You see the thing is this. I’m quite sure Matthew Hush has got hold of the will; and, when he once got it, he wouldn’t let go of it, don’t you think? I’ve been after him, and watching for him as I would for any other poacher—but he’s a deep one. I didn’t know Billy Bagshot was in the matter, or I’d have unkenneled him.”

“But do you know where this man Hush, is?” demanded Mr. Greenshield, as the other paused, as if considering what to say next.

“I know well enough where abouts he is,” replied Tom Notbeame; “for though he did beat us in Haldistow great copse when he got out of Farmer Bagshot’s house by the back way, yet I tracked him just as well as I could an outlying deer; and, if I could but get a warrant, I’d nab him now.”

Mr. Greenshield and Harry Haldimand looked at each other, completely puzzled; for, although to the reader, who has been made acquainted with the events in which Tom Notbeame had taken part, the whole matter may be very clear, yet to them his disjointed sentences were as obscure as a Halifax fog, where no man can see anything but himself, and only part of that. In order to draw forth a more connected account, Mr. Greenshield seated himself at the table, made the worthy landlord take a chair opposite, and then, beseeching him merely to answer his questions, induced him to give a detailed statement, step by step, of all his own proceedings since Sir

John Haldimand's death. The only facts with which the reader is unacquainted were that, after the unsuccessful search in Matthew Hush's baggage at the lodge, the coachman had informed the worthy respondent that, while waiting for him at the village near Sir Harry Hillhouse's, he had received intimation that Matthew Hush had quartered himself at Harble Farm, and that, after sage consultation with the wise heads of Haldistow, a guard had been set to watch narrowly Farmer Bagshot's premises and seize upon the suspected person as he came out. This had been done without warrant from any proper authority ; but, after Master Hush had effected his escape and had been traced for a considerable way, application had been made for a warrant, first to Sir Harry Hillhouse, and then to another magistrate, but, in both cases, had been refused.

“I know where to find him within a mile square,” said Tom Notbeame, in conclusion ; “and, as I can't get a warrant, I

don't see anything better that I can do than take him myself without one."

"Upon my life, I don't see that there is anything better," exclaimed Harry Haldimand rashly ; "and I will help you."

"The first object is to ascertain the fate of this poor child," said Mr. Greenshield, gravely. "Nothing should be thought of before that."

"There's no one can tell you so well as Matthew Hush," said Tom Notbeame.

"But is there any certainty of finding him ?" asked Mr. Greenshield. "You say that you know where he is within a mile. How long is it since he escaped you in Haldistow copse ?"

"That was the night afore last," replied Tom Notbeame ; "but I've got my dogs upon him. They won't lose sight of him, I'll warrant. We've run him into a corner where there's but one house and an old mill ; and I've got one fellow up in the top of the mill who can see all round."

"I doubt not *I* can get a warrant," said

Mr. Greenshield, after meditating for a moment or two. “What do you say, Henry? This good man’s evidence of the examination which he saw the fellow make of the chest, the skeleton keys and pick-locks found in his baggage, his concealment since Sir John’s death, and his furtive escape from the house in which he lodged, though not forming actual proof, establish a case of suspicion which may well justify any magistrate in directing his apprehension.”

Henry Haldimand was buried in a profound reverie. During the course of the preceding conversation, considerations had suggested themselves to his mind which, in his first eagerness, he had overlooked; and, when he came to reflect upon all the circumstances of the case, he was torn by contending impulses. To do justice to poor Kate, to discover what had become of her, to bring to justice a villain whom he had long known and detested were still great and all important objects in his eyes.

But, as he thought, the terrible question suggested itself to his mind, “How far is my father compromised in these transactions of Hush, and what will be the result to him of this man’s apprehension?”

For a moment or two, he did not answer Mr. Greenshield ; but then, suddenly starting up from the table, he said, “Let me speak to you for a moment.” And, drawing him into the window, he frankly told him all his feelings.

The gentleman to whom he spoke was not insensible of his candour ; and he pressed his hand warmly. “I feel for you much, Henry,” he said ; “and in existing circumstances, I think it will be better to leave this pursuit to me. You cannot be fairly expected to take part in anything, which may not only deprive your father and yourself of large property but also fix a terrible stigma on a parent. Go on to Haldistow, or Halcombe, pursue the inquiries for poor Kate there, and leave me to secure the apprehension of this villain, and to bring his deeds to light.”

One of his old gay smiles for an instant crossed Henry Haldimand's face. "That is just what I want not to have done," he said. "You do not understand me. My plot is just to reverse what you propose : to let you go on to Haldistow with my uncle Richard, who must soon be here, while I follow Master Hush, without warrant, or without constables, or anybody in authority, but merely my good friend Tom, and the people he can muster. I will take the responsibility upon myself, and pay the penalty, whatever it may be, if we do not find the will upon the man. I am justified, indeed, in apprehending him upon another score ; for I can swear he stole a watch of mine when he left my father's service."

Mr. Greenshield paused and mused ; and Henry Haldimand asked, warmly, " You do not doubt me, Graham ? I give you my word of honour that you shall be informed of every particular, and have the will in your own possession as soon as I obtain it. After that, we can consult as

to what is to be done ; but, in the meantime, I wish of course to keep everything that can compromise my father from the eyes of rude officers of the law and dunder-headed country magistrates. Trust me, Graham, trust me."

" I do, fully, Henry," replied Mr. Green-shield, " and was only considering whether I ought not to be present too ; but, if you act without a warrant, it will be better that I should take no part in the affair. It may pass as rashness in a young man ; but not in an older one ; and, as a magistrate for another county, I should not like to share in what is evidently illegal, unless indeed, the safety and the happiness of our poor Kate was concerned ; and, on considering the whole circumstances, I cannot bring myself to think that Hush can give any information. You say he fled and left her as you rode up, and took the same direction as the other man. The period of your short absence must have been that in which she went away or was taken

away ; and Hush himself could, in all probability, have nothing to do with it. We are more likely therefore to gain information at Halcombe or at some place in that neighbourhood ; and, as soon as I have seen the lawyer, I will hurry thither, while you pursue your own course.”

“ So be it,” replied Harry Haldimand. “ Now, Tom, I will go with you, as soon as I have got my pistols out of the portmanteau ; for, if sure of conviction, Hush will fight like a cat in a corner. Consider your plan well, while I get the weapons, and remember you act under my orders altogether. So that no responsibility attaches to you.”

“ I don’t fear responsibility,” said Tom Notbeame, “ though one should not boast either ; for I know things often go wrong when people brag much.

‘ Such is the chance, such is the state,
Of them that trust too much to fate.
No braging boaste of gentell bloudde

What so it be, can do me good :
No witt, no strengthe, no bewties' hewe,
What so it be, can death eschewe.'

But come along, sir, let's make haste ;
for it will be evening afore we get there,
and it's better to do what we've got to do
in daylight."

" Then fare you well, Harry," said Mr. Greenshield. " I will go at once to Mr. Bigood, and then to Haldistow and Halcombe. Let me hear the result of your enterprise as soon as possible."

" But where, but where shall I find you ?" demanded Harry Haldimand.

" You will hear of me at your uncle Richard's," said Mr. Greenshield, who was already at the door. " I will leave my address there, if I am absent."

CHAPTER XIII.

WE must now return to Sir William Haldimand, whom we left seemingly lifeless after his examination of the Old Oak Chest.

The candle guttered down and burned fast towards the socket, forming pillars of wax at the side, and then dropping over like the stalactites of some petrifying cave. Sir William lay upon the floor for full half an hour without sense or motion, like a corpse ; but then some signs of returning life began to show themselves. He opened his eyes, and closed them again, moved a hand, and strove to raise himself on his elbow, but could not. He then gazed vacantly at the ceiling, then turned his eyes from one side to the other

with an inquiring look, as if he did not clearly recollect where he was. At length he contrived with difficulty to rise from the ground, supported himself for several minutes by the table, and, when he had recovered more completely, lighted another candle, unlocked the door, and, finding his way with faltering steps to the dining-room, drank a large tumbler of sherry which he obtained from the drawer of the cellaret.

This seemed to refresh him ; and he returned to the little study, and again locked the door. In somewhat less than an hour after, Sir William Haldimand quitted the room, and retired to bed. The study, to all appearance, was exactly as he had found it, the oaken chest locked and sealed ; and, had any one opened it, they would have found the papers properly sealed up also.

Much before his usual hour of rising, Sir William Haldimand's bell rang violently ; and his servant found him up, partly

dressed, and apparently in his usual mood. But what a night had he passed ! Sleep had never visited his eyes ; and waking thought had been a curse to him. Well might his son say “the plague had begun.”

Oh, that terrible fever of the heart, when, in the fierce impetuosity of passion, we have done some act that cannot be recalled, and, in the lassitude which follows, the anguish of remorse seizes upon us ; when we thirst, with a drouth to which the fiery aridity of the desert is nothing, for one calm draught of the waters of oblivion, and, like the wanderer lost in those burning plains, long with the agonising longing of despair for the tranquil pleasures and gentle enjoyments which we have left, with innocence, behind !

Tossing restlessly on his bed in darkness, and silence, and solitude, the spectre deeds Sir William Haldimand ; and each before of a whole life passed in review pointed to the one that followed, as more hideous and more dark than itself. Every action has its ghost that never dies, but

wanders round us in our sojourn upon earth, influencing our fate, affecting our mind, now punishing or rewarding the deed past, now prompting to deeds to come, haunting us as the good or evil spirit, cheering us on the path of difficulty, danger, or distress, or plunging us deeper and deeper into despair and crime. All those spirits of past times were around his pillow ; and human forms mingled with them hand in hand : his brother, his wife, his daughter. He could see every feature ; he could trace every line, as if it were but yesterday that he had seen them ; and the face of each was terrible to him. It was too dreadful ; it was too much to be borne ; it had almost driven him mad.

How often does it happen that, with the wicked, the moment of fruition is the moment of disappointment ! The fruit of which we rob the garden turns to gall and ashes in our hand.

I have said that when Sir William Halldimand's servant entered his bed-room he found him in, apparently, his usual mood ;

for his manner he could govern and restrain when it suited him—none better. But there were things over which he had no such control. The corporeal is never wholly under the command of the mental. The sunken cheek, the ashy lip, the wandering, eager eye, suddenly assuming a dull and filmy vacancy, as if the spirit had hastily retreated from the window to commune with dark thoughts within: these told a tale of suffering which mere demeanor could not hide.

But the servant was a coarse and vulgar-minded fellow, shrewd and cunning enough in mere worldly matters, but with no mind save the mere instinct of a beast. He noticed not his master's haggard look, took no heed of the absent moodiness, and only remarked that the baronet had a slight contusion on the left temple where he had struck himself against the table as he fell.

“Has anything been heard of the young lady who was here?” asked his master

with a voice which all his power over himself could not prevent from trembling.

“No, sir,” replied the man, “nothing that I have heard of; but I have not seen anybody up at the house.”

“Go down to the lodge and ask,” said Sir William. “Stay—” And he fell into a fit of thought. “She *must* be found—something *must* be learned,” he continued. “Have a horse saddled for me. Tell some of the men to get ready to go with me—get ready yourself—order breakfast directly. Then go down to the lodge and enquire.—She must be found. This must last no longer.”

The last words were rather addressed to himself than to the groom; but the man lingered a moment to hear if there were anything more, and then retired.

Sir William Haldimand descended to breakfast, and forced himself to eat something. Then, mounting a horse, he set out, and passed many an hour in vain enquiries with an impassioned eagerness which made him hurry on, seeming to

divine people's answers before they were uttered. Here he gained one statement of what had been done, and there another. Here he heard a surmise which was palpably absurd, there a fact which had no bearing on the question. He stopped at Tom Notbeame's amongst other places, thinking that he might know something, or be in some way connected with the disappearance of Kate.

"The man is half cracked," he said to himself. "He always was wild and fantastical, I remember, as a boy—just the person to set the whole country in an uproar by conveying her away, and never telling where. He would laugh to see the anxiety of other people, and rejoice in tormenting me. Besides, he seems to have taken no part in the search. He has busied himself in persecuting Hush. Now, if he be really so attached to the family as he pretends, his first object would be to seek for this poor girl, did he not know that she was safe."

This thought seemed to comfort him

very much for a moment or two ; but fears and doubts soon returned.

He found nobody but the old woman at the Haldimand Arms ; and she replied to his enquiries that her master was out.

“ The boy too,” she continued, “ has gone down to help the men in dragging for the body.”

The words fell cold and chilling upon Sir William Haldimand’s ear ; a sensation of freezing awe seemed to steal over his very heart.

“ Has nothing been discovered ? Has nothing been found ?” he asked in a low voice.

The old woman looked at him askance ; for she very well knew who he was.

“ No,” she said, “ there has been nothing discovered ; and as to found, all that has been found is the blood by the waterfall, and the picklocks and skeleton keys, and a number of stolen things in that rascal Hush’s trunks. He’ll be hanged yet. I always said so.”

That was another blow. Picklocks and skeleton-keys found in Hush's baggage ! That was dangerous, very dangerous. It seemed one step towards discovery ; and Sir William Haldimand sat upon his horse's back and mused.

“ Do you want anything more with me, sir ?” asked the old woman, after having waited a moment or two.

“ No,” answered the baronet, abruptly ; and, turning his horse's head, he rode away. He dared not approach very close to the brink of the Mere. He feared to witness what was going on there ; but yet he hovered round it, and saw from a distance the boat with several men in it dragging for the dead body. He rode all round the Mere, passed over the little causeway at the farther end, and in and out amongst the sandy hills, and high banks, and scattered trees on the other side. Now he saw the boat ; and now he lost it again, as the ground fell and rose ; but at length when, coming nearer to the cascade, he got

a closer view, he perceived two men bending over the water, while another pulled the line of the drag with all his force, as if they were lifting something heavy from beneath the surface.

“They have got something now, sir,” said his servant, riding up close.

Sir William Haldimand made no answer, but, striking his horse with his heel, galloped away as fast as he could go, and never drew a rein till he reached Haldistow Hall. There, he entered the drawing-room, cast himself into a chair, and covered his eyes with his hand. But he could not shut out the sight which fancy presented ; and oh, how terrible was the passing of the next two hours ! Each instant he fancied that the news would come : every door that opened and closed seemed to announce the messenger : imaginary voices seemed to say : “The body has been found. She has been murdered and thrown into the Mere. Her death lies at your door.”

Minute after minute, hour after hour, passed in the terrible suspense. At length he could bear it no longer ; and, ringing the bell, he enquired if any news had come from the Mere. The answer was, “ No.” Nobody had been at the Hall that day, either from the lodge or from the village. Even the undertaker had not been there.

It was strange, he thought. People avoided the house. Did they think a pestilence was in it ? He felt that he was hated, that his presence was the pestilence that scared men away ; and he pondered in gloomy and bitter silence.

At length he said :

“ Go down and enquire at the village if anything has been found in the Mere.”

“ Dinner is ready when you please, Sir William,” said the man ; but his master waved his hand impatiently, and he departed.

Exactly on the spot where he left him, the servant found Sir William Haldimand on his return. He had tasted nothing.

Apparently he had never moved. He looked up, however, the moment the man entered, with the one word, "Well?"

"They have found nothing, sir," said the man. "It was a young tree they fished up when we were there, rooted up, they say, and carried out into the water when the bank fell and the river changed its course."

Sir William Haldimand seemed relieved ; but those terrible hours of mental torment had had their effect, which was not to be obliterated. He rose from his seat, and walked to the window—although, by this time, it was nearly dark ; and then, after gazing out vacantly for a moment or two, he turned to the man who still stood near the door, saying—

"Dinner!"

It was but little that he ate ; but he drank a good deal. He felt that his heart was not strong—that his bold resolutions were failing him—that he needed factitious force ; and he gained it, without approach-

ing the verge of intoxication, but still by drinking more than was wise. He felt himself fevered—burning ; but he walked with a strong step, and thought himself more ready to look in the face the evils he himself had wrought.

A few minutes after, the bell at the great front door was rung very gently. Nobody seemed to notice it ; but Sir William Halldimand, who was all ears, pulled the bell-rope in the drawing-room violently, and bade his groom, when he appeared, see who was at the door.

The man went out and returned, closing the drawing-room door carefully behind, while he said, aloud—

“A person wishes to speak with you, sir.” But then, advancing closer to his master, he dropped his voice to a low tone, adding : “I think it is Matthew Hush, sir. You’d hardly know him ; and I pretended not—he’s so dished up with a flaxen wig and a great handkerchief round his neck and chin.”

Sir William Haldimand gazed sternly in the man's face, asking himself—

“What can the scoundrel want with me now? He ought to have been in London long ago.”

The next moment, however, he said, “Admit him.” And the servant introduced a man looking like an old country shopkeeper, in a loose coat, a broad-brimmed hat, a large spotted silk handkerchief round his neck and chin, and a number of curls of light hair falling a good deal over his face. He stooped much in the shoulders, and walked with a sort of shambling gait; but Sir William Haldimand did not require two looks to recognise his confederate.

“Well, what do you want with me?” he said, as soon as the door was closed, in a tone that did not at all betray the recognition.

But Matthew Hush had been for many years a servant and knew better than to speak of anything important when

one of his own cloth had just closed the door. On the contrary, he opened it quietly and looked out, just catching a sight of the groom's figure beating a retreat somewhat suddenly. Then, closing the door again, he approached as close as was respectful to his former master, saying—

“Don’t you know me, sir?”

“Perfectly well,” replied Sir William Haldimand. “I thought you were in London long ago. You wrote to me that you were going immediately abroad.”

“I wanted the honour of a few minutes’ conversation with you first, Sir William,” replied the man, in the most perfectly respectful tone; “and then I will go directly, if—”

“If what?” demanded his former master, sternly; and habitual deference cowed for the time the insolent sort of triumph which Hush felt really at heart.

“If I can arrange matters, sir,” he replied

“Arrange matters!” echoed the baronet. “What have you to arrange, but to get the money, secure your passage, and pack yourself off?”

“Oh, there is a good deal more to arrange than that, Sir William,” replied Hush. “I have not got the certificates of good conduct in your service which I asked you to give me. You know a good reputation to a man making his way in the world as I am, is a very great advantage.”

Something like a grim smile came upon Sir William Haldimand’s face. The contest between two acute and unscrupulous minds was not unpleasant to him. It was what he had been accustomed to all his life. He liked it, and it revived him.

“I told you before,” he answered, “that as soon as I am assured you are safely out of England I will send you those certificates, but not till then.”

He imagined that Matthew Hush would still make a struggle to obtain what he sup-

posed to be the man's real object; but he was mistaken. Matthew Hush, for the time, dropped the subject of the certificate, but asked, in a low, quiet tone,

“Then there is another thing, sir. What am I to do with the will?”

Sir William Haldimand started up from his seat, and gazed in the man's face with a look of astonishment and consternation, very satisfactory indeed to worthy Matthew Hush. He had not calculated upon so unequivocal a manifestation of surprise and dismay. Nevertheless, he stood calm, quiet, and apparently unconscious, leaving the few words he had uttered to work their full effect.

“The will!” exclaimed Sir William Haldimand. “You told me it was destroyed!”

“Oh, dear no, sir, beg your pardon,” replied the tranquil Mr. Hush. “I only said it was all safe; that the people might look where they liked, but they would not find it. You did not tell me to destroy it. You merely told me to take it.”

Sir William Haldimand remained perfectly silent. He saw that he had been dealing with one whose wit was quite equal to his own; that, in the pride of his position and his wealth, he had forgotten to take some of those precautions which he would have adopted with an equal of the same degree of cunning; that he had been using a sharp tool somewhat carelessly, and had as usual cut his fingers. However, the man had been perfectly civil, and had expressed no sinister objects, although Sir William's knowledge of his own heart, and of Matthew Hush's, forewarned him that such would be soon apparent. He was calculating all the probable consequences, while he remained silent, as rapidly as possible; and at length Matthew Hush said, in the same sort of insinuating tone,

“I should like to get rid of it. It is a dangerous thing to carry about with one; and they've not only been searching my baggage, but hunting myself.”

“Then give it to me at once,” said Sir William, abruptly.

“ Oh, dear, sir, I have not got it with me,” replied Matthew Hush. “ It is too valuable to carry in my pocket.”

He paused to see whether Sir William would take the hint; but that gentleman chose that he should speak more plainly before he made any advance; and he replied, with as much coolness as he could assume,

“ Then send it to me by post. Fold it up in a sheet of paper, address it, and put it in the letter-box.”

“ It’s a valuable document,” said Hush, emphatically.

Sir William made no answer, but took his spectacles from his pocket, and put them on.

“ I am a poor man, Sir William,” said Hush, deliberately, after a considerable pause; “ and I would fain be richer before I die. Now I dare say there are some people who would give ten thousand pounds for that will. It would be well worth their while.”

Sir William Haldimand could bear no more.

“ You consummate scoundrel!” he exclaimed, “ you shall never get that, or anything else, for it from me.”

“ Well, sir,” said Hush, still quite respectfully, “ I am sorry to hear you say so; but a gentleman cannot expect to get such a valuable thing from a poor man for nothing.”

Sir William Haldimand moved suddenly towards the bell; but Hush stood with such perfect composure before him, that he paused, irresolute.

“ I have a great mind,” he said, “ to send for a constable and give you in charge this moment.”

“ Dangerous, Sir William,” said Hush, with an ill-repressed sneer. “ There are certain secrets that would hurt me less to tell than you to have told. Besides, you’d lose a fine property. Sixteen thousand a year at least, and a house better than Newgate, a good deal.”

Sir William eyed him sternly, half in-

clined to brave the worst, and yet not feeling fully confident that in all his many communications with Hush he might not in some way have committed himself.

“ You are a bold and determined villain,” he said ; “ but, as you have trusted yourself here to speak with me, I will not take advantage of you.”

Hush smiled slightly ; and Sir William perceived it.

“ You think that I will yield,” he said ; “ but you are very much mistaken. Mark me well, Matthew Hush. I would sooner die to-morrow than live in fear of any man ; and, from the moment that a man puts me in fear of him, a struggle for life or death begins between us. I speak plainly ; and I forewarn you, that I will hang you before I have done. Had you destroyed that paper, you would have enjoyed the reward which I have given you, thinking it destroyed. Had a few hundred pounds been needful to you from time to time, you would have had them, as well as

protection and countenance in any difficulty ; but now—”

“ Pray, pray, Sir William, don’t speak so loud,” said Mathew Hush ; “ and let us talk reasonably without being angry. You must own you are rather hard upon me to expect me to give up a thing which I can so easily turn into money. Why, if I were to take it to young Lord Martindale, or to Colonel Charles Haldimand either, I could get ten thousand pounds for it to-morrow.”

“ Not without hanging yourself, villain,” replied Sir William. “ Do you know that stealing a will is felony ?”

“ Quite well, sir,” replied Hush ; “ and I believe the person who prompts, as well as the person who executes, comes under the lash of the law. But in all my bargains I put in a word or two for security ; and, of course, when I bargain to give up the will, I should bargain for no proceedings —against myself, at least. I might be called upon to merit pardon by a full con-

fession ; but, depend upon it, I would slip my own neck out of the halter, which I could do the more easily by showing that I had no interest in taking the will, though you had."

"Scoundrel, you are over-reaching yourself," said the baronet ; "but I recollect well every word I have written to you ; and you can show no proof whatever that I was cognizant of your conduct."

"Beg pardon, Sir William," said Hush, with quiet insolence. "There are two or three words in different letters about "*the affair*," and "*the business in hand*," and other matters of the same kind, which, together with a certain cheque for a thousand pounds, given the day after the will was sought for without being found, might be sufficient, I think, to corroborate the King's evidence even against so great a man as Sir William Haldimand."

The baronet sank slowly into a chair ; and Matthew Hush saw his advantage. At

the same moment, the clock in the Hall struck nine ; and, with an assumption of frankness, the scoundrel proceeded, saying,

“Come, Sir William, I do not wish to drive a hard bargain. If you’ll say five thousand, I’ll take it, and bring the will here to-morrow night, and destroy it before your eyes.”

Sir William Haldimand was silent. He could not, or he would not, speak ; and Matthew Hush, after listening to the clock, continued—

“Well, sir, I must go. I have business a long way off ; but I will come here to-morrow night at this hour, and throw a pebble up at the window there, if you will let me in. I will bring the will with me. If you will purchase the paper for the sum I say—good—we will put it in the fire. If not, I must do the best with it I can.”

He turned as if to go ; but, the next instant, came near to Sir William, and said, in a low, significant tone—

“I shall take all needful precautions, sir, to make sure that people do not hurt me without hurting themselves.”

This said, he departed with his usual noiseless step.

CHAPTER XIV.

I MUST describe the situation of Doctor Porteus's house. It may seem somewhat late in the day to do so ; but better late than never. Strange to say, the house was as unlike the man as possible, although he had bought the land, laid out the grounds, and built the dwelling. It was a neat, pretty white building, with a slated roof and a long verandah in front. It had plenty of comforts, plenty of conveniences. The country villa of an alderman could not have more ; but yet it had a quiet, rustic, unpretending appearance—slightly qualified

by the slates, indeed—which was pleasant to the eye and harmonious with the scene. It was situated half way up a high and somewhat steep hill, down the slope of which meandered a private road from a lodge gate at the foot. Just opposite to this hill, and separated from it by a deep ravine, through which flowed a stream, was another lesser hill, in great part covered with short wood, and having very precipitous banks down to the river.

The only public road ran on Doctor Porteus's side of the water ; but there was a foot bridge across, somewhat higher up than his lodge-gates. On the top of the hill opposite to Doctor Porteus's windows, rose a windmill which had long gone to decay ; and a little lower down, bosomed in the wood, was a small house belonging to a man who was put in to look after the property ; for the whole copse and the fields below, which, as may be supposed, were but badly cultivated, formed part of an estate which for five and twenty years

had been cut and carbonadoed, grilled and devilled, on the great gridiron of the Court of Chancery. Bounded by the deep ravine and the river on three sides, and by unfenced fields fast returning to a state of nature and some heathy ground on the other, a little sort of peninsula was formed which might contain the extent of about a mile square, the whole being crowned by the mill, which was the only prominent object, the cottage which I have mentioned being screened by the wood.

Altogether, the scene was a somewhat wild and solitary one, the only redeeming point being the house and grounds of good Doctor Porteus.

Nevertheless, on the evening succeeding the one mentioned in the foregoing chapter, just as the air was beginning to get grey, a party of five or six men, some on horseback and some on foot, passed the lodge appertaining to Doctor Porteus's grounds, and took their way onward along the road towards the little bridge I have mentioned. They paused suddenly before they reached it,

however ; and those who were on horse-back dismounted, and led their horses back to the gate. There they requested of the gate-keeper, as a favour, that she would allow their beasts to stand tied within the enclosure.

The old woman looked at them somewhat suspiciously, and answered in broad Scotch, “ I ken na hoo that may be. The doctor’s a dour man whiles, and disna like strange folk’s cattle in the policy.”

“ Tell him,” said one of the party, “ that it was Tom Notbeam of the Haldimand Arms left them, and that he is looking for the man who has been wronging Miss Kate Haldimand. He’ll not mind then, I’m sure.”

“ Ae noo !” rejoined the woman. “ I’ll warrant that’s the body I’ve seen daundering aboot on the hill abune the brig.”

“ Exactly,” said Tom Notbeam. “ Just tell the doctor all about it ; and he’ll not mind.”

Thus saying, he led the horses in, secured

them to the palings, and then proceeded on his way with Harry Haldimand in his company and two or three other persons to give aid and assistance in case of need. From time to time, as they walked on, Tom looked up towards the mill, the top of which still appeared towering over the wood.

“He must be in the house, sir,” he said, as they were just crossing the bridge. “There’s no sign out at the mill; and Stephen was to hoist a red pocket-handkerchief on a stick if the fellow was out of bounds.—You, Tim, stand here on the bridge. You know Matthew Hush. Don’t let him pass for your life.”

He walked on a few steps, and then returning, said, “He’s just as likely as not to bundle himself up in some strange clothes. Somebody thought they had seen him down at Haldistow, with a broad-brimmed hat and a large coat, just like an old codger. Mind you don’t let him go by.”

The man promised to stop everybody ; and, taking a little path at the foot of the hill which led them to the neck of the isthmus, Tom Notbeame disposed his forces so as to mount towards the house I have mentioned by the only paths which led down the hill on that side.

“ Now, mind you, sir,” he said to Harry Haldimand, whom he placed on a good broad cart-road, “ you can see the mill all the way up. If they stick out a red handkerchief on a pole, he’s bolted out into the copses ; and we shall need all our wits to find him. So give a good loud shout as if you saw a fox. We shall hear you.”

Harry Haldimand nodded his head, and the ascent, which was steep, began. He had scarcely uttered a word since they left Dingle, while Tom Notbeame, in the excitement of the occasion, had talked the whole time. It seemed as if they had changed characters ; but energy at least was not wanting on the part

of Harry Haldimand ; and, though he still walked on in the same thoughtful mood, meditating not only gravely but gloomily, he frequently raised his eyes towards the mill, watching for the signal. None appeared for some time ; and the party were evidently drawing nearer together as they mounted the slope ; for Henry could hear the feet of the man on his right hand and the pushing aside of the branches as he made his way up a narrow path. The moment after, on lifting his eyes to the mill, he saw the red handkerchief fluttering in the air ; and, giving a loud halloo, he sprang forward up the hill as fast as he could go. At the end of fifty yards, the road took a turn to the right to reach the house before it ascended to the mill ; and, when he arrived at that spot and looked onward, Harry Haldimand could see the cottage, with its little garden, which he had been informed by Tom Notbeame was the habitation of as great a poacher as any in the country.

A far more important fact, however, was this : there, before him, about midway between himself and the house, stood the very person of whom he was in pursuit. I say "stood," because, for an instant, Hush remained motionless, scared by the new comer's shout, and hesitating which way to turn. The instant, however, that his eyes fell on Henry Haldimand, very sudden changes came upon the face of Mr. Hush. The first expression was evidently fear ; but, in a moment after, rage seemed to take possession of him. His brow gathered together, and he clenched his teeth tight ; for it instantly flashed through the mind of that excellent personage that Sir William Haldimand, by sending his son to pursue him, thought to save his reputation and screen himself from the consequences of the acts he had prompted.

"I'll be revenged on them both," he muttered. But, the next instant, the repeated halloos of the people below showed him that he was surrounded on all sides ;

and he darted back to the house as a place of refuge, probably asking himself, "What shall I do next?" Harry Haldimand sprang after him like a greyhound, and, being eager and light of foot, gained upon him at every step; but, just as he was passing the garden gate, Hush entered the house and banged to the door.

A wise and prudent man would have waited till the rest came up; but Henry Haldimand was nothing of the kind; and, casting a glance over the front of the house, he perceived that one of the lattice windows of the lower story was open. Darting towards it, he leaped in. A middle-aged woman was sitting by the fire, who uttered a scream at the intruder's unceremonious entrance. But, without taking the slightest notice of her, he dashed through the room, out at the door on the other side, and, hearing a step above, rushed up a little wooden staircase that presented itself, and tried the door at

the top. It was fastened within. Setting his foot against it, Harry burst it open with a loud crash. The room was a small one, with a window just opposite the door, a table near the window, and a fire-place, with a fire burning in it, on the pursuer's right hand. Between the window and the table stood Matthew Hush, with a brace of pistols lying before him and a black leather case, at the lock of which he was working eagerly with a key, which apparently refused to turn.

“Stand back, Mr. Haldimand,” vociferated Hush, the moment Harry appeared in the room. “What will you give me for the contents of this box? It will hang or save your father; and, if you seize me, I will hang him as sure as I live.—Will you give me—”

“Not a penny,” cried Henry Haldimand, springing forward.

But the scoundrel was too quick for him. He snatched a pistol from the table: it

was already cocked : and, without remorse or hesitation, he fired. Harry had judged him well. Driven into a corner, all fear had vanished.

Young Haldimand reeled back, but did not fall, and a loud halloo from below told that the rest of the pursuers had arrived. Matthew Hush looked from the window with the other pistol in his hand, and hesitated for a moment. Perhaps he meditated self-destruction. But the next instant he perceived that, the men having all got clubbed together in front of the house, the garden behind was free. A chance of escape was left him ; and, as long as a chance existed, he would not throw it away. He put the pistol in his pocket, and gave an anxious look towards the black leather case ; but then, resolving to abandon it, he got upon the window-sill and leaped down. Faintly and with difficulty, Harry Haldimand made his way to the window, and just saw him jump the

little fence and plunge into the wood. He tried to shout to the men in front ; but his voice was weak ; and, walking as fast as he could to the door and into another room, he told Tom Notbeame from the lattice what had happened and which way Hush had taken.

“Jump in there, Frank,” said Tom Notbeame to one of the men, “and run up to Mr. Haldimand. The rest come with me.” And away he ran in pursuit of the fugitive.

The enterprise now became a chase ; but Tom Notbeame well understood that, if he could keep the person he pursued from the narrow neck of land which joined the wooded hill to the flat country, the bridge would afford the only way of escape, and, that being well guarded, Hush would be cut off. He therefore dashed at once for the little isthmus, followed by one of the men at the distance of about forty yards ; and it was wonderful to see the activity of the leader, some-

times running, sometimes jumping, sometimes swinging himself down the steep places by the branches, caught and let go again as soon as his feet touched the ground, just when the wood was cracking and breaking with his weight.

He was not a minute too soon, however; for, just as he gained the edge of the copse, he caught a glimpse of Hush's figure pushing through the underwood in that direction; and, with a loud yell, he darted in to seize him. The scoundrel, however, was as quick and cunning as a fox. He turned in a instant, doubled round an old oak, and dashed away for the bridge, evidently not knowing that it was guarded. Whether he at length perceived the man stationed there or not, cannot be told; but probably he did; for, when within about fifty yards of it, he turned sharp away again to the left, passed between two of the pursuers without their perceiving him till it was too late, and then ran up the hill again, taking the direction of the

cottage. He was met and turned again, however, by the rest of Tom Notbeame's companions, and forced to recede once more towards the banks of the river ; but it was now at a steep and rugged part, where a bank of some sixteen or seventeen feet high lay immediately before him, rising to fifty or sixty feet at a little distance on his left. The trees grew thin as they approached that part of the river : the rock—for it was a firm sandstone—rather overhung the water than sloped from it : the top of the bank itself was bare of everything, except about an inch of soil and a mantle of soft green turf, full of moss ; but a little, hardly distinct path wound away thence to the bridge, at the foot of which the bank was of no height and the river smooth and narrow. A tolerable swimmer could there cross it in two minutes ; and probably Master Hush calculated upon doing so. But, when he got out of the copse upon the greensward, there was Tom Notbeame straight

between him and the bridge ; and he could hear the rest of the party rushing down in pursuit and hemming him in. No time was given for much thought ; but still the rapid calculation went on in his mind as quick as lightning. Should he give in and suffer himself to be taken, or should he plunge from the high bank into the stream, which was there both broad and deep ? The latter was a dangerous experiment ; and, half an hour earlier, he would probably have chosen the former ; but he recollects that he had shot Henry Haldimand, and that, whatever chance he had had before, that simple fact would be enough to condemn him.

The papers, too, the all-important papers, had been left behind, containing the proof of what he had done. Seeing that his only safety lay in being able to get across the river, he made up his mind to the leap ; and, just as Tom Notbeame was hurrying up, he gave a bound and a spring which carried him to a considerable dis-

tance from the shore. It was a daring attempt ; but it was the only chance for life ; and that one chance he was not willing to throw away. Casting his hands together, and assuming that firmness which many men, unmoved by passions, would call folly, he leaped down from the top of the bank into the water at a single bound.

“ There he is, there he goes !” cried a number of voices.

“ He has beat us, upon my life !” said another.

“ Shall I give him a shot, Tom ?” cried one of the men.

Tom Notbeamé made no answer ; and the man, without ceremony, fired, just as Master Hush, gasping and breathless, emerged from below the surface and struck towards the opposite bank.

The bullet did not touch him ; but it went so close that, by a sudden effort, Hush plunged again beneath the water.

What happened then, no one knows. He did not rise again. It has been sup-

posed some weeds got round his legs ; and others have thought that, in diving, he hit his head against the stump of a tree or a large stone ; but neither wound nor contusion appeared upon his body when it was found, which was not the case for two days ; and it was evident that his death was that of a person not born to be hanged.

Tom Notbeame and his companions waited for a minute or two to see if he would rise ; but, as he did not reappear within a reasonable time, Tom told his companions to go back to the house and look after Mr. Haldimand, while he himself ran at full speed across the bridge and up the little well-gravelled road which led from the lodge to the house of Doctor Porteus.

“ Is the Doctor at home ? ” he asked, eagerly, of the servant who appeared at the door on his ringing the bell.

The man replied in the affirmative ; and Tom Notbeame, without giving time for

any announcements, hurried on at once to what he knew to be the Doctor's study.

Tom was not good at explanations ; and, the moment he saw the old doctor sitting in his arm-chair reading a pamphlet, he exclaimed :

“ Come along, sir, come along, and bring your tools with you. That scoundrel, Mat Hush, has shot Mr. Haldimand.”

“ Where, man, where ?” exclaimed Doctor Porteus, starting up.

“ I can't tell where,” replied Tom, “ for he didn't say ; but I suppose, wherever it is, a hole is a hole, and a bullet is a bullet.”

“ Ye d—d fulé,” cried Doctor Porteus, “ ye've nae mair brains in yer skull than a guse. Where is Mr. Haldimand ? Tell me that, gin ye've as much brains as a pyatt.”

“ He's at the house over there,” answered Tom Notbeame, pointing with his finger through the window.

“ Tell them to put the powney into the

gig like lightning," cried the old doctor, " while I get out my instruments. It wad tak me an unco time to hirple up there wi' my tree leg like a lame hen."

Tom Notbeame darted away, and soon gave the orders ; but, before they could be executed, the old doctor was at the door with a large Morocco case under his arm, swearing and blaspheming in a very improper manner, giving all his servants to a personage he called " the Deil," and pronouncing authoritatively that their skulls were stuffed with barley instead of brains.

At length, however, a little open carriage, which he possessed, drove quickly round ; and in he got, ordered the servant to drive over the bridge as fast he could go, and up to the house upon the hill. Rapidly enough did he descend ; but the way up seemed as if it would never be accomplished. The road was rugged as well as steep ; the *powney* was not particularly strong ; and some half dozen times there was peril of her jibbing. But, at length,

the door of the cottage was reached ; and Doctor Porteous hurried out the best way he could. He entered the house at once, without feeling any surprise at that which not a little astonished Tom Notbeame, who had mounted the hill full as fast as his pony. Of all the men he had sent back to that spot not one was visible ; and, entering immediately after Doctor Porteus, he heard him demand of the woman of the house—

“ Where is the auld fule, body ? Where’s the man that has got himself shot ? ”

“ They’ve carried the lad down to Dingle,” said the woman, sulkily. “ What did he come and put himself in harm’s way for, jumping in at the window like a greyhound dog ? ”

“ The wife’s mad ! She’s demented ! ” exclaimed Doctor Porteus, looking from her to Tom Notbeame. “ I ask ye, ye randy beggar, where’s the minister ? Where’s Mr. Haldimand ? ”

“ Lord bless you, sir ! ” cried Tom Not-

beame. "It's young Mr. Haldimand—Master Harry, as we used to call him when a boy."

"Master Harry be d---d!" said Doctor Porteus, putting his instruments in his pocket with a look of as much anger as if he had been [really disappointed that the person wounded was not Mr Richard Haldimand. "He may gang to the deil, if he likes, and so may you too."

But the next moment enquired he in a milder tone—

"Where have they taken him to, good woman?"

"He told them to carry him to the white cottage—Mrs. Mainwaring's cottage," replied the woman; "and he has taken the black case with him. So my husband 'll lose his pay, I suppose, if what they say is true, that Master Hush is drowned. I wish they were all—"

But the benediction she was about to bestow, was cut short by an exclamation from old Doctor Porteus.

“ Ha ! hoo’s that ? Mrs. Mainwairing’s cottage ! How the deil did he find it out ? I’ll gang doun, I’ll gang doun. You, Tam Notongue, get in and drive me doun. I ken weel ye can be trusted when she’s in the case.”

“ I never saw her in my life,” said Tom Notbeame.

“ The man’s a born idiot !” exclaimed Doctor Porteus, as he hoisted himself into the little carriage ; and, telling his own man to go home and Tom to drive on, he was soon on his way towards the town of Dingle, which lay some three or four miles off.

CHAPTER XV.

SIR WILLIAM HALDIMAND was ill ; and he lay in his bed all day. The terrible anxiety, the grief, the remorse, the apprehension, the struggle against himself, the resistance of pride to the convictions of his own heart and understanding, the prospect of dark and bitter reverses, of his criminal acts being exposed, his name blighted, and his honor gone, even if personal punishment did not follow, had worn and exhausted him ; and he felt his powers failing, and his energies insufficient. He would send for no medical advice. He knew that the disease was of the mind. He

lay sleepless in his bed till towards the close of the day, meditating gloomily on every painful subject that memory or fancy could suggest.

During the day, a number of his own servants, for whom he had sent to London, arrived at Haldistow. Undertakers came and went ; for he had appointed the funeral of his brother to take place the next day but one ; and frequent messages were sent to his chamber, requiring orders and directions. But a sort of apathy had fallen upon him ; his usual eager interest in everything connected with himself was extinct. His answers were short, and not always very clear ; but they were given with so much impatience that no one ventured to ask for explanation ; and, as soon as they were uttered, he relapsed into moody meditation. About four o'clock, he rose and dressed himself, and towards five descended to the drawing-room. Dinner he could not eat, though he took some soup and some wine ; and then, ordering

the windows to be completely closed, he waited with irritable restlessness for the hour at which he expected the return of Hush.

“I will give him what he wants,” he thought. “I will give him what he wants, and have done with it. This is becoming too much for my brain. Hark! There is a carriage! The scoundrel, on the strength of his new mine of wealth, must travel post, I suppose.” And he laughed bitterly; but, the next moment, he muttered to himself—“Perhaps it may be Dick. The news has reached him, doubtless.”

A minute or two after, a servant entered, and announced that a gentleman, named Greenshield, desired to see him.

“Ah, Greenshield,” said the baronet to himself. “That was one of the executors. Now will come the contest. I must get rid of him soon. I will see him,” he added, aloud. “Show him in.” And, while the servant retired for that purpose, the baronet considered his plan.

“ I will put off everything till after the funeral,” he said to himself. “ Then this business with Hush will be settled ; and no more fears, at all events. Richard, too, will be here—so—so.”

“ Mr. Greenshield !” said the servant, opening the door ; and Sir William Haldimand rose to receive him politely.

With a slow step, an air of firm, calm dignity, and both in dress and carriage displaying the appearance of a man of distinction, Mr. Greenshield came forward towards the table by which the baronet stood. Sir William’s eyes were fixed upon him ; but, at first, not the slightest glance of recognition was seen upon the baronet’s face ; and, for an instant, Mr. Greenshield thought and hoped that his task might be less painful than he had anticipated. It was indeed but a passing thought that he gave to the subject ; for his mind was filled with painful apprehensions which mastered every other consideration, though he was, to all appearance, calm and tranquil,

The next instant, however, a look of surprise and even of dismay came upon the face of the baronet. Art, habitual self-command, and the power of his own will, were all gone ; and he exclaimed, in a voice, every tone of which was full of anguish—

“ Graham ! Graham ! You here at this unhappy moment ?”

“ Even so, Sir William Haldimand,” replied the other, in a firm but sad tone. “ I have come here not to reproach you, not to pain you more than is absolutely needful. I have, indeed, promised your son that I will not do so ; but I have duties to perform to the memory of my dead friend, your brother. I have duties to perform to the memory of my dead wife, your daughter. I have duties to perform to my poor child, your grandchild, if she be still living.”

“ Then you know not where she is—then you have not seen nor heard of her !” exclaimed Sir William ; and, sinking down into the chair again, he covered his eyes

with his hands, exclaiming, “ Oh, God ! this is too much !”

Mr. Greenshield was moved. He saw that Harry Haldimand had judged rightly in supposing that by some means Sir William Haldimand had become aware that Kate was the child of his daughter, and that the plague had indeed begun. Even while suffering himself, he could feel for the suffering of the man who had injured him ; and, advancing closer, he said—

“ Be comforted, sir. I trust we may yet obtain intelligence of her, and find her safe and well. Be comforted.”

“ Comforted !” exclaimed Sir William Haldimand, in a hoarse voice, uncovering his face. “ Comforted ! I shall never know comfort more. And can *you* speak to me of comfort—you who took my child from her father’s house to lead a life of poverty, and unite herself to a man so much below her ?”

“ Stop, sir,” said Mr. Greenshield. “ I

would fain not dwell upon these topics ; for, if I do, I shall have words to speak that might well crush you, if you had one human feeling left. Dare not to charge me with those evils which your own ill-regulated passions and cruel conduct have produced. I took your daughter from a life of wretchedness under a father's tyranny and cruelty, to share my fate—not perhaps a brilliant one, but one that afforded every prospect of ease and independence. I took her from a home where she knew no love after her mother's death, to the bosom of one whose every thought and feeling was devoted to her. You blackened my name to my employers. You calumniated, traduced and persecuted me. By your means, both she and myself were reduced to the poverty that you speak of. You drove me forth to seek in foreign lands the means of supporting my poor wife, leaving her behind me till I had made myself a new home. You—But I will say no more. Nay, I am sorry

for what I have said, and did not intend to do so. But let us cast such thoughts aside. The bitter memories of the past will live in the hearts of both. May they do good to both ! But the present is that which we ought now alone to consider. Rouse yourself, Sir William Haldimand. Do justice to your daughter's child. Give me what information you possess regarding her ; and let us both unite energetically in seeking for her, and guarding against any farther evils."

"I *have* sought," said Sir William Haldimand, in a low tone, with his eyes fixed on the ground—"I have sought everywhere. I have sought and thought night and day. Spare me, sir, spare me ! My brain will not bear much more." And he pressed his hand tightly upon his forehead.

Mr. Greenshield gazed at him for a moment or two in silence. He pitied him, and regretted much that indignation had for an instant deprived him of that calm moderation which he had intended to exercise.

“ Has a house called Harble Farm been searched ?” he asked, at length, wishing to occupy the mind of the baronet with some object of active pursuit.

“ No, no,” replied Sir William, looking up. “ Why should it be searched ?”

“ Because I learn,” replied Mr. Greenshield, “ partly from your son, and partly by enquiries made since, that the man who was shot by Henry in an attempt made with Hush to carry off my poor child, must be one farmer Bagshot, the proprietor of that farm.”

“ With Hush !” exclaimed Sir William, starting up. “ With Hush ! The atrocious villain ! I now see it all. And Harry shot him—Harry shot him, you say ? Thank God for that ! But when did this happen ?”

“ I thought you must have heard of it,” replied Mr. Greenshield. “ In riding from Halcombe to Dingle, Harry came upon the two men as they were attempting to force my poor Kate across the common. Hush

fled. Harry wounded and pursued the other, ; but, when he returned, Kate was gone."

" Where is my son ?" asked Sir William Haldimand, with a half vacant look. " Harry is travelling on the continent. I think that my mind must be wandering. Surely Harry is abroad."

" He has returned but a few days," replied Mr. Greenshield ; " he landed at Plymouth, and rode round by this part of the country while his baggage was sent forward."

" And where is he now ?" enquired Sir William Haldimand. " Why is he not here ?"

" He left me at Dingle some hours ago," replied Mr. Greenshield, " to apprehend that scoundrel, Matthew Hush ; and, doubtless, he has him safe in custody by this time."

Sir William Haldimand clasped his hands together ; and his cheek, which had been flushed with excitement the moment before, became as pale as death. He

walked slowly across the room, and then sank into a chair, with a groan. For a moment, Mr. Greenshield fancied that he had fainted ; but the working of his clasped hands, and the murmured sounds which escaped from his lips, soon showed him that the agony of the baronet's mind had not found relief in forgetfulness.

“ What shall I do ?” Mr. Greenshield asked himself. “ How shall I tell him ?” And then, approaching quietly to Sir William's chair, he said : “ Your son, doubtless, would have come on with me ; but he wished to be present with the party gone to apprehend Hush in order to direct their proceedings, and to insure that nothing resulted therefrom to compromise painfully any member of his family.”

Sir William looked up.

“ So thoughtful ?” he said. “ Or was this your suggestion ?”

“ His own judgment guided him entirely,” replied Mr. Greenshield. “ I at one time proposed to go with him and ob-

tain a regular warrant for the man's apprehension ; but he preferred taking the responsibility of going unauthorised with several country people, and forcing the scoundrel to give up the papers he possesses in order to avoid all public examinations. I willingly yielded to his views, and came on hither. We shall, most probably, soon hear more."

Sir William Haldimand did not seem to derive all the satisfaction from this statement that Mr. Greenshield anticipated. He continued to sit with his eyes fixed on the ground, his lips moving, and his hands still clasped together ; but he uttered no distinct words. At length Mr. Greenshield said :

" We had better proceed at once to search this place, Harble Farm. We know not what terror and what inconvenience my poor child may be suffering."

" Yes, yes," replied Sir William Haldimand. " Search, by all means search. Take all my servants, and search: I am not fit."

“ But you are a magistrate for this county, I think,” rejoined Mr. Greenshield ; “ and we must have a warrant.”

“ You shall have one. You shall have one,” said Sir William, rising with difficulty, and walking to the table, on which was placed an inkstand. “ You shall have a warrant,” he repeated, sitting down and taking a sheet of paper.

Three times he dipped the pen in the ink, and held it suspended, as if about to write ; but he wrote nothing, and seemed always to lapse into thought the instant his hand touched the paper. Again the wheels of a carriage rolled over the terrace ; and Sir William threw down the pen, exclaiming—

“ That is Richard. That is Richard. He will give you a warrant. I know not what I am doing. My thoughts are upon other things.”

“ It is most probably your son,” replied Mr. Greenshield, “ for Mr. Richard Haldimand is at the Rectory. He and Colonel

Haldimand came over with me ; but it was judged best that I should see you first."

Both looked towards the door, as they heard voices in the hall. The next instant distinct sounds reached them.

"I wull see him whether he likes it or no," cried the good, broad tones of Doctor Porteus. "I have business that can wait no man's liking. Get out o' they way, flunkey, or I'll gie ye a launder." At the same moment the door was thrown open ; and Doctor Porteus stumped into the room.

"Ah, Greenshield ! you here ?" he exclaimed, as soon as he entered. "Weel, that's right ; but my business is with this braw baronet. Sir William Haldimand, I wish ye just to step into my carriage and go over to the town o' Dingle to see yer son. He wants to speak wi' ye on business of importance."

This address seemed to rouse Sir William Haldimand at once.

“ Why does he not come here, sir ? ” he demanded, rising with much of his old look and manner.

“ Because he canna,” answered Doctor Porteus ; “ but he’ll tell ye all about that ; and I’ll tell ye something as we go.”

“ But how happen you to be the messenger ? ” demanded Sir William.

“ Deil ’s in the mon,” exclaimed the old doctor. “ He’s wasting the precious meenits when there’s no time to be spared,” And turning to Mr. Greenshield, he said quite aloud, though probably he intended it for an aside. “ The lad ’ll no let me extract the ball till he has seen and spoken with his father, for fear he should die of the bleeding. Ye had better come at once, Sir William.”

“ Extract the ball ! Die of the bleeding ! ” exclaimed Sir William Haldimand. “ I will come directly.” And he rang the bell furiously, exclaiming at the same time. “ Explain, sir—explain in pity ! ”

“ Why, it’s joost that born deevil, Hush, has

shot him," replied the old doctor ; "but's no of needcessity a mortal wound. I've seen mony waur weel in a month ; and it some comfort to think that the dour spitefu' devil is drowned himsel' in the river. But ye had better waste no time, auld man ; for the ball had best be extracted at once before inflammation sets in !"

" Give me my hat and cloak," exclaimed Sir William Haldimand to the servant who entered. " Now, sir—now I will come." And, without waiting for farther questions, he went out of the room.

Mr. Greenshield had remained silent during the scene, but not without emotion ; and, the moment Sir William was gone, he asked, in a low voice—

" Is Henry badly wounded ?"

Doctor Porteus shrugged his shoulders, and the other gentleman continued—

" I would fain go to see him, poor fellow ; but I must stay here and pursue the search for Kate."

“ If that ’s a’ man, come along,” said Doctor Porteus, “ I’ll gie ye news o’ her before ye’ve done. The chaise will hold three —for it is one of they auld warld conveyances from the Silver Cross, in which Noah’s three sons might have travelled wi’ a’ their wives.”

“ My own chaise is here in waiting,” said Mr. Greenshield. “ If, indeed, you can give me news of Kate, it will be better to go.”

Doctor Porteus nodded mysteriously, and then asked—

“ Does the baronet ken wha ye are ?”

“ Perfectly,” answered Mr. Greenshield ; and then, hearing Sir William’s voice in the hall speaking impatiently, he added—“ Go on, my good friend, I will follow directly ; but I had better first see poor Charles Haldimand, who is wild with anxiety about Kate, and tell him that I have got a clue.”

“ Which will no be lang in spinning to an end,” said the doctor. And, going forth,

he got into the chaise with Sir William Haldimand, whom he found in a high state of excitement, abusing him not very coherently for his delay, although it had lasted not much beyond a minute.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN a small but exceedingly neat room, and in a bed with the white dimity curtains looped up so as to admit the free air all round, lay Henry Haldimand, pale and evidently suffering. A small black leather case was upon the table: the same, in fact, which had been the companion of the wanderings of Mr. Hush. Round the bed was gathered a group, consisting almost entirely of women, although one man was present amongst them. An elderly lady in a widow's cap, and her beautiful daughter, were on the side of the bed nearest to the fire-place; and on the other

side was one whom the reader knows well —none other than fair Kate Haldimand. The fourth person was a man seated at a table with pen and ink before him ; and, as the light fell upon his face, it might be perceived that he was Mr. Bigood, the solicitor at Dingle.

“ You need not go, Mrs. Mainwairing,” said Harry Haldimand. “ What I have got to say is little, and may be heard by all the world. Now, my good sir, will you write, if you please ?”

“ You had better give me some brief notion of the property that is to be devised,” said Mr. Bigood. “ I shall then be able to proceed more rapidly.”

“ Nothing but some small personal property,” replied Harry Haldimand, “ and the property settled upon my mother’s children at the time of her marriage. I find that a power is given in the settlement to the children of the marriage, being of age, to bequeath their reversionary interest in the money to any one they please.”

“Then it is an absolute reversion?” said Mr. Bigood; “and not contingent upon your surviving your father?”

“Exactly,” replied Henry Haldimand. “But the will may be very short. I wish to leave all that I die possessed of, or have the power of leaving, real and personal, as you lawyers say, to be equally divided between my niece, Katherine Graham, more commonly called Katherine Haldimand, and my affianced wife, Henrietta Mainwairing.” And he held out his hand affectionately towards the fair girl who stood beside him, with large tears in her eyes.

“Be so good, sir,” he continued, “as to describe my sweet Kate here carefully, so that there may be no doubt regarding the person to whom I refer. Her father’s name, at the time of her birth, was Graham; but he has since changed it, on inheriting the property of the senior partner of his house at Lima.”

“I will take care,” answered the solicitor; and set busily to work, while Harry,

looking up in Kate's face, said, with one of his old gay smiles,

"I have often heard you were incomparable, Kate; but I trust you are not indescribable also."

"Indeed you had better leave all to Henrietta," replied Kate, in a low tone. "You tell me the will has been recovered; and, even were it not, I should be well and kindly taken care of, depend upon it. See how many friends have started up around me even now! Dear Alice Richmond, and kind Lord Martin-dale. Besides, there is my uncle Richard, and Charles."

"I swore an oath," answered Henry with a smile, "that you should share my all, Kate. But I can tell you both, my dear girls, I think you will never be my legatees; for I don't feel at all inclined to die just yet; and I only do this to guard against all contingencies. I always was the most prudent man in the world, though my papa thought the contrary.—What is it, Mr. Bigood?"

"You will name trustees, I suppose, and an executor, Mr. Haldimand?" said the lawyer.

"Oh, yes; my uncle Richard and my cousin Charles will do for both," replied Harry Haldimand; and then, turning round again, he renewed his conversation with Kate and Henrietta, talking almost as gaily as in times of old, till, at length, Mrs. Mainwairing herself stopped him, saying—

"Doctor Porteus particularly directed that you were not to talk much, or excite yourself; and I really think we had better go."

"I recollect, my dear lady," said Henry Haldimand, "a Frenchman who gravely proposed to go to England by land. I advised him strongly to do so, telling him that it was much the best way, if he could manage it; and such is, nine times out of ten, a doctor's advice."

"But we can take away the possibility of your talking much, at least," said Mrs.

Mainwairing ; “and indeed I think we have already been here too long.”

“ Well,” he said, with a smile ; “ but you must come back soon. I am the most sociable creature in the world ; and, whenever I am left long alone, I make companions of dark fancies.”

When they were gone, the will was speedily finished ; and, some witnesses being called in, was signed with all due formality.

It had not been long completed, however, before a certain degree of bustle in the house, following the sound of wheels, announced that some one had arrived ; and in a moment more, the stumping of Doctor Porteus’s wooden leg was heard, as he advanced along the passage followed by Sir William Haldimand. Mr. Bigood was gone by this time ; and Henry Haldimand, left alone, raised his eyes anxiously towards the door. He was grieved and alarmed when he observed the altered appear-

ance of his father. The time which had passed since he last saw him, or rather the violent passions and wearing emotions which had occupied that time, had wrought a greater change than any ten years of his life; and a certain sort of wandering look was in his eyes, keen and still brilliant as they were, which was very painful for a son to behold.

The first words of Doctor Porteus, as he advanced into the room, were,

“The folk are a’ daft thegither. What the deil did they light a fire for, laddie? I said ye were to be kept cool.”

“I told them to light it, doctor,” replied Henry Haldimand. “I may have need of it.”

“Oo ay,” replied Doctor Porteus with a knowing look. “Then I’ll leave ye; but get o’er what ye’ve got to do as fast as possible, and then ring the bell for me.”

Thus saying, he retired, and found his way to the neat little parlour of Mrs. Mainwairing’s cottage, where she was

seated with her daughter and Kate; the hearts of all three anxious and agitated by one of the paroxysms of that fever of hope and fear in which we live in this world. Though, as we have seen, good Doctor Porteus was a man of uncivil speeches, he was really kind at heart; and now he sat down to comfort his three fair companions with greater skill and delicacy than might have been expected. He began to talk instantly of Henry Haldimand and his wound; and, without any parade of learned terms or any doubtful words and solemn shakes of the head to guard against all future contingencies, he made light of the case, and said that, when he was in the army, he had attended many hundreds with hurts of the same kind, but much worse.

“They puir callants,” he said, “had for the maist part naething to lie on but the bare gound, and naething to cover them but a rag of canvass; and they a’ got through. So why shouldn’t this laddie, wi’ a good bed

and a warm house o'er his heed? Ye see, Ma'mselle Ninette, as they'd ca' ye in France, ye needna be sae scared like aboot the accident, though I'm thinking frae what I see that ye've kent Mr. Haldimand be-fore he was brought here to-day."

" Ah, yes, we've known him long and well," replied Mrs. Mainwairing.

" Weel, my good lady," replied the doctor, " ye're likely to ha'e mair visitors the night; for I've joost made free to ask a freend o' mine over here, wha's something to do with my bonny bird, Katie; and that's no other than Mr. Greenshield, as they ca' him noo, though he once had a braw Scotch name, which he should ha'e been o'er proud o' to change for ony other."

" Oh, I shall be delighted to see him," replied Kate, totally unconscious of her near relationship. " He is one of the best and most amiable men in the world."

" Ye're bound to think so, my bonny bairn," said the doctor, nodding his head.

Whether he would have proceeded to explain the whole mystery or not, I cannot tell ; for, at that moment, Mr. Greenshield's chaise drove up ; and, in a minute after, he entered the room. He was not alone, however ; for he was preceded, rather than followed, by Charles Haldimand. The joy of that unexpected sight —to see him there, to see him well, to see him so little even changed—overpowered all other sensations in the bosom of poor Kate. All that she had lately suffered returned to her mind, as if for the purpose of enhancing the rapture of that moment ; and, forgetting every restraint, she started up, and cast herself into her lover's arms.

Mr. Greenshield allowed them to indulge for a moment in that dear, warm embrace ; and then he took Kate's hand, saying,

“ Not one word for me, Kate ?”

“ Oh, yes, many, many !” replied Kate, with the tears in her eyes. “ How I have longed for your coming.”

“ Then come to my arms,” exclaimed Mr. Greenshield, throwing them around her. “ Come to my arms, my child—my dear, long lost, but well beloved child.”

The emotions of Kate at that moment are not to be described. Surprise had some share, but not so much as might be expected. Not that she had ever had the slightest suspicion of the truth ; no, not when, held tight in her father’s arms, after he had saved her from death, he carried her up from the shore to the inn. But she had always entertained the hope and the expectation of meeting with her parents, and the earnest, eager yearning to be clasped to her father’s heart, had prepared her at any time for the meeting. It was very sweet, now that the moment arrived, to find that her father was one whom she already loved and esteemed, and to be bound to him not only by the bond of filial duty, but by respect, affection, and gratitude.

The tears flowed rapidly from her eyes ; and as she stood with one hand clasped by

Charles Haldimand, and the other by her father, she asked many questions with a faltering voice, as to how all this had come about.

“ Not now, my dear child, not now, Kate,” replied Mr. Greenshield. “ Very soon, I will tell you all ; but I had better now go to confer with your uncle and his father. But you, Kate, too, have a story to tell ; and it must not be told till I return.”

“ Ay, ay, that will be soon telt,” cried Doctor Porteus ; “ but gang yer ways noo, and bring yer talk to as speedy a conclusion as may be ; for I’m wanting to get that bit o’ leed out o’ the lad’s wound.”

Before he went, Mr. Greenshield, to the surprise of Kate, took Mrs. Mainwairing’s hand, and pressed it kindly in his own, as that of an old friend.

“ It is some time since we have seen you, my dear sir,” said the elder lady ; “ but we have had marks of your kind remembrance.”

“ Of my deep gratitude,” replied Mr. Greenshield, “ for your kindness to this dear child’s mother, in our hours of trouble and of sorrow. Yes, yes, my dear Kate, in this house were you born ; and from this house were you carried to Haldistow.”

“ There, gang yer ways, gang yer ways,” cried Doctor Porteus. “ If ye waste all yer time in sic clavers, we shall no get the matter over till midnight.”

“ I will show you the way,” cried Kate ; and, opening the door, she went out with her father into the little passage which led to the bed-room where Henry Haldimand was lying. Before they reached the end of it, however, the door of the room opened ; and Sir William Haldimand came forth.

We must turn for a moment to what had occurred at the bedside of Henry Haldimand. His father gazed at him in a strange sort of silence till Doctor Porteus had quitted the room ; and then, approaching till he stood close by his side, he said,

as if with a great effort, "Well, Henry, well."

"Sit down, my dear father, and compose yourself," said Henry Haldimand. "I trust I am in no danger—I do not think I am ; but I have been anxious to see you in case of the worst, as I have several things to say and to explain."

Sir William Haldimand seated himself in the chair that stood near, and leaned his head upon his hand, looking away from his son, and seemingly in deep thought. Henry Haldimand went on, however ; and, by the changes of expression which came upon his father's face, he saw that he was heard, even if for some time there was no other appearance of being listened to.

"I trust, sir," he said, "that when you have heard all I have done and why I have done it, you will not think that I have acted wrongly or meddled with your affairs impertinently. I learned from certain information that the will of my uncle, Sir John Haldimand, had been purloined by

our old servant, who afterwards became butler at Haldistow, Matthew Hush. What were his objects I had no business to inquire ; but, as I knew him to be a consummate villain and quite capable of turning upon his benefactors, calumniating them in the grossest manner, and accusing them of any crime that might suit his purpose to impute to them, I was anxious to force him to give up the will, *lest it should be said that we had anything to do with its suppression.*"

He uttered the last words very slowly : not with any particular emphasis, but rather as if he found a difficulty in choosing them so as not to imply more than he meant.

After a short pause, he went on to say, "I found that a party of men, most of them servants or tenants of my late uncle, had discovered the place of Hush's retreat and were determined to seize him with or without a warrant, and bring his conduct to light. I thought it much better to put

myself at their head, both in order to show your son publicly pursuing this scoundrel, and to guard against his saying or doing anything which might rouse the tongue of slander against my father's name."

He watched the baronet's face eagerly as he spoke ; and, seeing a sort of livid hue spread over it, he added, "The man's malice, hatred, and cunning, were equal to any foul device ; and therefore I thought it better boldly to encounter him myself."

"You did right, you did right," said his father, in a hollow tone, speaking for the first time since he had seated himself.

"I am most happy that what I have done has met your approval," said Henry Haldimand ; "but at all events the result would have justified it. After being wounded, upon the manner of which I need not dwell, I got possession of the leather-case which he carried with him, and brought it hither. After sending off the good doctor to seek you, I have examined

the case, and found in it, as I expected, the will, still sealed up and with the names of the executors endorsed upon the cover. This I shall reserve for them, as I have promised one of them to do. But," he continued hastily, seeing that his father was about to speak, and fearing that he might demand the will ; " there were other things in that case, some of which undoubtedly belong to you. They are here." And, putting his hand beneath the pillow, he pulled forth a packet of some half dozen letters neatly folded and tied up. " They are all in your handwriting," he said, " and I think it may be better to commit them to the fire."

Sir William Haldimand took the letters with a trembling hand, and gazed at them in silence, without rising from his seat. Henry Haldimand paused, and seemed to hesitate ; but, at length, he said, briefly—

" Besides these letters, I found this. It may be a forgery, or it may not. But, at all events, I am sure it was not fairly obtained."

And he held out to his parent the cheque for a thousand pounds.

He made no farther comment ; he said not a word more ; but conscience spoke in the bosom of Sir William Haldimand, and told him what a damning evidence of his complicity in his servant's villany had fallen into his son's hands. He felt himself degraded and condemned in the eyes of his own child ; and dark and horrible were the sensations which that consciousness produced. With the teeth chattering in his head, he crushed the cheque in his hand, and threw it into the fire ; but then some other thought seemed suddenly to strike him ; and, pointing to the letters which he still held, he fixed his eyes keenly upon Henry's face, demanding, in a low, deep voice—

“Have you read these ?”

“Not one of them—not one word of them,” replied his son. And Sir William Haldimand cast them after the cheque.

They all blazed up together, while he

stared at the fire-place with a haggard eye ; and then, with his hands clasped together, and an absent, thoughtful look, he walked towards the door, opened it, and went out, as if utterly forgetful of his son's existence.

A little lamp hung in the middle of the passage ; and when Sir William Haldimand came forth, he was conscious that there were two persons before him. Mere bodily habit made him draw a little on one side to let the others pass ; but, the next instant, his eyes rested on the face of Kate ; and, with a fearful start, he held out both his hands towards her.

“Emily ! Emily !” he cried ; and, at the same moment, a terrible change came over his face. His eyes rolled ; his mouth was suddenly drawn on one side ; and, though he did not actually fall, he was forced, by the sudden deprivation of all power in his right side, to lean against the wall of the passage for support. Mr. Greenshield sprang to his assistance ; and,

catching him in his arms, half bore, half fled him to the nearest room, while Kate, in terror, hurried back to the little parlour in search of Doctor Porteus. The old doctor came immediately, followed by Charles Haldimand. They found Sir William seated in an arm-chair and partly supported by a bed that was in the room. The signs were not to be mistaken ; the vacant yet anxious eye—the distorted mouth—the powerless fall of the right arm and leg—and the ashy whiteness of the fingers on that side, told their own tale.

“A stroke of paralysis,” said Doctor Porteus, bluntly ; and then he muttered to himself—“Weel deserved too. Now Greenshield, my man, there’s little to be done here ; and my advice is, that he be taken to Haldistow as soon as possible ; but I’ll do what little I can, if you’ll gang into the laddie there and keep him quiet. Dinna tell him what has happened, man, but just say that his father is a wee sickish, and

queer aboot the heed—ye may weel say that. I'll come after ye in a meenet."

Mr. Greenshield did as he was desired ; but Henry, though he certainly thought his father's conduct strange, was so accustomed to his moody, uncertain demeanour, that Sir William's abrupt departure from the room gave him no suspicion that he was actually ill. As soon as Mr. Greenshield entered, he held up the will to him.

" There it is, Graham," he said, " there it is. Thank God I have got it. You had better not open it till after the funeral. And now send Porteus to me as soon as you can ; for the fellow shot me here—just above the collar bone—the bullet is still in—and I could almost fancy that, like the old cock of the rock, he had been firing at me with red hot shot."

" The good doctor will be here directly," said Mr. Greenshield, who thought it better to prepare his mind, in some degree at least. " He is just now prescribing for your father, who does not find himself quite well ;

and Porteus advises him to go back to Haldistow directly without any more excitement."

"I will bet a hundred guineas to a golden pippin," said Harry Haldimand, in a low tone, "that he goes back without seeing me again."

Mr. Greenshield did not reply; and, in another minute, Doctor Porteus stumped into the room.

"Well, Doctor," said the wounded man, a little querulously, "is my father going back to Haldistow without even bidding me good bye?"

"I'll no let him," answered Doctor Porteus. "He's had enough o't for this night. It's set his stomach and his heed a' wrang; and he must hae quiet, and some gude spanking doses."

"Quiet!" said Henry Haldimand, in a musing tone. "Where will he find that? Now, doctor, do pull this bullet out. I've done all that I want to do—made my will, taken leave of my friends, and would

fain get the execution over as soon as possible."

" Ay, de'il doot ye," answered Doctor Porteus. " Here, Greenshield, hand the caunle, and, when I've got a' the straps and things ready, joost tak a grip o' his right arm, and hold it fast and straight while I houk for the ball. Ye maun lie quite still, young man ; for having but ane leg to spare, I cannot put my knee upon yer breest as I did wi' a puir fellow wha got joost sic another hole punched into him in Germany. I weel nigh squeezed the breath out o' his body ; but, as he wadna lie still, there was no help for it ; and, when he was weel again, he said, ' Doctor, I'd rather have a cannon ball in my stomach than your knee.' "

Whilst thus speaking, the good doctor was taking out his instruments, and spreading bandages and plasters on the bed. He then uncovered Henry Haldimand's neck and shoulder, removed the appliances which he had had recourse to, to guard

against all hemorrhage, and then probed the wound.

“ Ay, there it is,” he said. “ Clear o’ the artery too ; and I dinna think the bone’s splintered. We’ll soon get at it.”

“ The sooner the better,” said Henry Haldimand.

With a steady hand, and an eye undimmed with age, perfectly careless too, it seemed, of giving pain, so that he accomplished his object—a high quality, we are told, in surgeons—Doctor Porteus plunged a pair of long forceps into the wound, opened them a little, making Henry Haldimand wince and shudder, and then, pressing them tight, drew them out.

“ Here it is, here it is !” he cried, holding up the bullet, while a stream of blood followed. “ It’s a half-ounce ball. There, never mind the blude, there’s nae mair than reasonable. That’ll do no harm.”

Nevertheless, he doubled a piece of lint into several folds, placed it upon the orifice, and told Mr. Greenshield to hold it there.

“ Where’s yer coat ?” he said. “ I want to see your coat.”

“ There, on that chair,” said Henry Hal-dimand, pointing. “ What do you want with my coat ?”

“ To see that nane o’t went in wi’ the ball,” said the old doctor, examining all the clothes in which the young gentleman had been wounded ; but nothing appeared to lead to the supposition that anything remained in the wound ; and then, after having put the young gentleman to some torture to ascertain that no bone had been injured, and to make quite sure of the nature of the wound at once, he dressed it carefully, and took every precaution against farther hemorrhage. Then, giving him a squeeze of the hand, he said—

“ Noo, laddie, if ye’re no weel again and running aboot like a wild cat in three weeks’ time, say the auld doctor has forgotten his cunning. But there’s a bonnie lassie in the other room will be glad to hear the tidings. So I’ll joost tell her.”

“ Ask her to come and see me,” said Henry Haldimand. “ I am better when she is with me.”

“ Then I hope she’ll always stay with ye,” answered the old doctor, laughing ; “ for I’ve a great notion that ye’ve much need o’ being made better than ye are or ever were. I’ll tell her, if ye’ll promise to haud yer tongue and only look at her. They fules o’ lovers,” he continued, turning to Mr. Greenshield, “ think that’s quite enough till they’re married ; and then they want to look at somebody else.”

“ Of whom do you speak ?” asked Mr. Greenshield, in some surprise ; for his thoughts were full of Kate.

“ Oh, of bonny Ninette,” replied the old doctor. “ This callant has been coming about here for a lang time, speering after his sister, till he’s got over heed and ears in love wi’ as sweet a little lassie as ony on this side the Tweed, and, moreover, without a bawbee in her pocket, which makes it all the more romantic.”

While thus speaking, he was diligently washing his hands ; and, when this operation was performed, he left his patient alone with Mr. Greenshield. A moment or two after, the door was timidly opened ; and Henrietta Mainwairing crept into the room, followed by her mother.

“ How are you, Henry ? ” she exclaimed, gazing at him eagerly. “ How are you ? ” And, seeing a relieved expression on his countenance even before he could assure her that he was much better, she fell upon her knees by his bedside, and thanked God fervently. The moment after, a carriage drove away from the house ; and Mr. Greenshield, going out, found Kate alone in the little parlour.

“ Sir William has gone,” she said ; “ and Charles, kind and self-denying as he always is, has consented to go with him ; for Doctor Porteus could not accompany him the whole way.”

“ Then now, my Kate, for your history,” said Mr. Greenshield, seating himself beside her.

"It is simple, and soon told," replied Kate. "I believe I was very silly and very wrong in leaving the house at all; for Sir William Haldimand surely would not have hurt me; but I was so much agitated and had been so much over-powered by all the sad events of the two preceding days that I gave way to terror. The maid, Susan, who was to follow me immediately, was far longer than I expected, but without being in the least to blame, as I have since discovered; and I reached the little side of the Mere before she came."

The part of the story which followed, the reader knows up to a certain point. It was all interesting to her father's ears; and he made her relate it minutely. After telling him of her rescue by Henry Haldimand, she continued thus,

"At the moment, I was so much alarmed that I had hardly power to use my limbs, and was trying to gather strength to run to the neighbouring house when a carriage

appeared on the road coming from Halcombe with post horses. I thought it looked like that of old Doctor Porteus ; I knew that he was travelling back to our neighbourhood from a distant part of the country ; and, overjoyed at the thought of meeting with a real friend to protect me, I called loudly to the post-boy to stop. He did so ; and the window was immediately let down, when a woman's voice demanded what was the matter. I did not know well what to do ; but, agitated and confused, went close to the side of the carriage when, to my surprise, I heard the well known voice of Alice Richmond exclaiming in great astonishment, ' Good Heaven, dear Kate, what are you doing here alone ?' I told her in as few words as possible ; and she insisted upon my geting into the carriage, and going with her. I had my reasons, however, for not liking to go to the house of Lord and Lady Martindale ; and I frankly told Alice that I must not leave that part of the country before you or my

uncle Richard had arrived. She said that at all events I could come the next stage with her, and that by the way we could arrange some plan together. To this, I assented. The post-boy was told to give information at the Haldimand Arms that I had gone on towards Dingle with Miss Richmond ; but I have reason to believe that, fearful of leaving his horses too long, he either did not execute the commission at all, or else gave his message in a way which was not understood. The thought of finding protection with Doctor Porteus had now taken possession of me ; and Alice kindly consented to drive to his house before we went to Dingle. We found, however, that, although he had returned from a distance about two hours before, he had set out again almost immediately. I asked the servants if they knew where he was to be found ; and they replied that they believed he had first gone to Mrs. Mainwairing's, and then to Haldistow. I immediately followed him hither, knowing both

Mrs. Mainwairing and her daughter, in whom my dear uncle used to feel a deep interest, and whom he had more than once taken me to see. Doctor Porteus was gone ; but Alice and myself came in to see Mrs. Mainwairing, who, as soon as ever she heard of the situation in which I was placed, insisted on my staying with her and Henrietta. I did so willingly ; and most kind they have been, but not more so than dear Alice Richmond, who came to see me on the following morning, and who did all that I would allow her, and more than I desired, to comfort and support me. She even sent over Lord Martindale, to whom she is engaged, to give me protection and assistance in any difficulty till your arrival. Indeed, if I have found some to treat me with harsh unkindness, there are very many who have shown more affection and tenderness than I any way deserve.”

CHAPTER XVII.

Two days passed ; and it was the morning of the funeral.

How often does it happen in life that one sorrow mitigates another ! We think that they accumulate ; but very frequently they serve but to counterbalance each other. Kate had suffered greatly since she had quitted the house, which was the only home she had ever known ; but I much doubt, and she herself much doubted, when she returned to Haldistow on the day before that of which I now speak, whether she would not have suffered quite as much—nay, perhaps more, though in a different

way—if she had remained in sad tranquility brooding over the heavy loss she had sustained. Fear, anxiety, frequent change, the constant looking for something new and astonishing, had forcibly withdrawn her thoughts from the great subject of her grief; and the idea of the death of her earliest friend and benefactor had become familiar to her mind more gradually and softly than could have been the case if nothing else had occurred to oppress and agitate her.

When she returned to Haldistow Hall, however, the impression returned sadly and solemnly enough. The half-closed windows, the silence, the comparative solitude, the few servants that were seen, the still, quiet step with which they walked about the house, the low voices, the sad looks, all spoke that death was there; and the dark reality pressed upon her more and more. It was a sad return; and, before she reached her own room, her tears fell fast.

At the moment of her arrival, no one was there to receive her. Mr. Greenshield and Mr. Richard Haldimand were both at the Rectory. Sir William was stretched upon a sick bed above, his intellect impaired, his pride abased to the lowest humiliation, and his corporeal powers all prostrate. Several of the old servants, indeed, had returned. Her own maid was there; but Mrs. Giles had not yet returned from Halcombe, although she was expected in the course of the evening.

The girl, Susan, would fain have prattled and marvelled, and recapitulated everything that had occurred; but Kate stopped her, saying, "Leave me now, Susan. I will hear everything you have to tell by-and-bye. At present, I wish to spend an hour alone." As soon as she was gone, Kate left her own room; and, with limbs that trembled, and a slow and quiet step, she walked to the chamber where she had closed the eyes of her second father. She opened the door silently, and entered.

There, in the middle of the room, with one faint ray of light streaming upon it, raised high upon tressels, stood the gorgeous coffin which Sir William Haldimand had ordered for his brother. The lid was not yet screwed down ; and Kate, with a shaking hand, removed the covering from the face. It was very beautiful, each fine clear line accurately preserved, untouched by any trace of agony or sorrow. The broad, clear forehead, the stronglymarked eyebrows, the well-chiselled nose and rounded chin were all exactly as they had appeared in life, except in colour. It seemed like a waxen image of good Sir John Haldimand sleeping tranquilly. Happy are the dead who die in the Lord ; and Kate felt that he must be happy. But yet the tears dropped from her eyes like rain ; and, after kissing the cold icy brow, the touch of which made her start, she replaced the fine lawn over the face, and left the chamber, still weeping.

She was taking her way back to her

own room, when suddenly, near the door, she stopped and thought of Sir William Haldimand. She asked herself, what he for whom she mourned would have had her do towards his brother ; and then, retracing her steps, she sought the room where she had heard her grandfather had been carried. She knocked at the door ; and a sharp voice said, “ Come in.”

When she entered, she found a hired nurse from the village standing beside the bed, with a cup and spoon in her hand ; and Sir William Haldimand, propped up by pillows, with the mouth still twisted, and the jaw dropping from time to time, was gazing, with lack-lustre eye, at the hangings of the bed.

“ What is it, Miss ?” said the nurse, when she saw her, at the same time putting a spoonful of melted jelly to the sick man’s lips.

It was a terrible sight : the proud, irascible, vindictive, ambitious, covetous, cunning man in a state of paralytic fatuity, fed by a woman.

“ I only wished to see if I could be of any assistance,” replied Kate, sincerely grieved and shocked. “ Can I give you any aid in this sad task ? ”

“ No, I thank you, Miss,” replied the woman, in a common-place tone, which jarred sadly upon poor Kate’s ear. “ He’s quite quiet, and takes everything I give him. The doctor will soon be here to look after the blister ; but it’s all no use. He’ll never be any better, though I shouldn’t wonder if he were to go on in this way for many a year to come, just like old Paul, the watch-maker.”

Kate turned away, and left the room ; for there was something inexpressibly shocking to her in the woman’s utter insensibility to the sad scene. It was new to Kate ; but the nurse had seen it many a time. When the fair girl stood between the two rooms, where lay, what we may well call, the *bodies* of the two brothers, she thought, with a sigh—

“ There are states to which death is far preferable.”

We must now return to the morning of the funeral, of which I have spoken in the beginning of this chapter. Much of the ceremonial which Sir William Haldimand had directed, was countermanded by Mr. Richard Haldimand, who knew what the wishes of his dead brother had been. The escutcheoned hearse was not used ; and the coffin of Sir John Haldimand, covered with a simple velvet pall, was raised on the shoulders of his own tenantry to be carried to the vault where his family slept.

It was a bright and beautiful day, the yellow afternoon sunshine spreading over all the sky and tinging the withering leaves of the tall trees with even brighter hues than autumn had given them. As the slow procession moved on, down the terrace and across the park, preceded by some mutes, and followed, first by Colonel Haldimand and Lord Martindale, with Mr. Greenshield and several of the neighbouring gentry, and a long, dark line of tenantry and old servants, the deer in the park, attracted

by the unusual sight, came up to within a little distance and stood and gazed, then bounded away and gazed still farther off, as if even they felt some degree of awe at the solemn spectacle.

In the village every house was closed, and each inhabitant stood at his door bare-headed, with such signs of mourning as he could display. Many a wet eye, too, gazed at the passing of the corpse.

Richard Haldimand had not shrunk from reading the funeral service over his wife ; nor did he now fail in that duty to his beloved brother. But that solemn office, though every word thrilled through his own heart as he uttered it, and told of separation upon earth, had no saddening tone for him ; for, to his ear, it spoke of re-union in heaven. It was full of hope and not of dismay.

It had been judged better by both her father and Mr. Richard Haldimand, that Kate herself should not be present at the funeral although she much desired it ; but

she was not altogether well ; for grief, anxiety, and terror had shaken her a good deal ; and it was necessary that she should be present at the opening of the will, which was to take place immediately after the sad ceremony.

When all was over, Mr. Richard Haldimand returned to the Rectory for a moment—laid his gown aside—and then, joining the rest of the gentlemen present, walked slowly back to the house. They conversed but little as they went ; and a few words between Richard Haldimand and Mr. Bigood, the lawyer, was all that was uttered.

“ I think it will be better,” said the solicitor, in answer to a question from Mr. Haldimand, as they walked up the avenue, “ to have all the servants present as well as the friends of the family. They are mentioned in the will ; and it is better that they should hear it read.”

The clergyman assented ; and they soon after entered the drawing-room ; and Kate

was sent for from her room where she had remained during the whole morning. Charles Haldimand met her at the foot of the stairs, and brought her in upon his arm ; and, after a quiet, but affectionate greeting from most of those present, she seated herself in a distant corner while the servants were sent for.

When they had come in and taken their places around, Mr. Greenshield produced the will, which he had received from Henry Haldimand, and handed it to Mr. Bigood, who, seated a table in the midst, read from the cover the words—

“The last Will and Testament of Sir John Haldimand.” He then proceeded to break the seals, which had evidently never been tampered with. The will and its codicil formed a somewhat long document ; and it is not necessary to enter into all the particulars. Suffice it, it was found, as the reader has been already made aware, that Sir John Haldimand had not made Kate the heiress of Haldistow, but had simply left

her the sum of sixty thousand pounds, and had appointed his brother and Mr. Greenshield her guardians and the executors of the will. To his dear nephew, as he expressed himself, Colonel Charles Haldimand, he had left the whole estates of Haldistow Hall and Hartland, together with several farms which he had acquired since he came into possession. The property in Glamorganshire he had not noticed, as that passed in course of law to his brother, William. He left ten thousand pounds, which had accumulated upon some funds he possessed, to his brother, Richard, and, in the codicil, a similar sum to his nephew, Henry. There were bequests, moreover, to various charitable institutions, and a sufficient sum allotted to keep up for ever the schools which he and Kate had established in the village and neighbourhood, and to pay for the annual prizes for good conduct which had been instituted at the suggestion of Mr. Greenshield. Then came a few memorials to friends and dependents ; and, amongst

the servants, hope at least had not gone beyond reality. They all found themselves kindly and liberally remembered.

When the reading of the document was concluded, and the servants had retired, a low murmuring conversation was commencing, when Mr. Bigood said aloud :

“ I think, Mr. Haldimand, before anything else, we ought publicly to examine the papers in the old oak chest. When I, in a hurried manner, went over them, looking for this will, I perceived several documents of much importance, especially regarding this young lady. As I had the honor of informing you, I ventured upon an act perhaps not perfectly justifiable in refusing to restore the key to Sir William Haldimand before the arrival of yourself and Mr. Greenshield. Here it is ; and I will now either deliver it to you, or proceed to open the chest in your presence, if you think, as I do, that we had better conclude the business at once.”

“ I think so most decidedly,” said Mr.

Greenshield ; and Mr. Richard Haldimand assented.

As it was impossible to bring the chest into the drawing-room, from its great weight, the whole party moved silently towards the door, Mr. Bigood leading the way with the key in his hand. It will be remembered that between the room where they then were and the study, lay first, the dining-room, and then the library ; and in crossing these several rooms Mr. Bigood, with his business-like haste, got considerably before the rest. He threw open the door of the study, just as Kate and Charles Haldimand were entering the library at the other side, while Richard, Lord Martindale, and Mr. Greenshield were a little in advance. The moment, however, that Mr. Bigood threw open the door, an exclamation burst from his usually cautious lips, which made all the rest of the party start and hurry their pace.

“ Good God !” he exclaimed, “ who is this ?”

Before any means could be taken to keep the sight from her eyes, Kate had entered the study ; and a spectacle was presented to her which made her tremble terribly. The old oak chest was open ; and, partly kneeling by it, partly fallen forward into it, was Sir William Haldimand, wrapped in a silk dressing-gown. They were raising him up at that moment ; and she saw on his features the cold settled expression of death. A key was found in the lock, which had evidently been filed in various directions, to make it fit the somewhat complicated wards. Thus, the method by which the will had been abstracted, and the connection of that fact with Sir William Haldimand himself, were now clearly proved.

When they raised the unhappy man, they found a bundle of papers tightly grasped in his hand, and they had some difficulty in removing them ; so much so, indeed, as to create a belief that life was not extinct. But this was an error. Sir

William Haldimand was dead, and the body already becoming cold.

How he got to the place where he was found, was never clearly known ; for, when brought to Haldistow from Dingle, he certainly could not have walked, unassisted, from his own room to the study. The nurse declared that she had only left him for a few minutes to get something that was wanted ; but it was supposed that, moved by curiosity, and thinking Sir William was incapable of stirring from his bed, she had descended to hear the will read with the servants. Doctor Porteus afterwards declared, it was not at all impossible that, either in consequence of the treatment he had undergone, or moved by some very strong anxiety, a sufficient degree of strength might have been suddenly restored to carry the baronet to the study ; and it was supposed that, with his intellect clouded, and under that sort of morbid anxiety which persons in his unhappy state frequently experience, he had gone

down to possess himself of the papers concerning Kate, when the hand of death overtook him in the very act.

Thus ended the schemes and contrivances of Sir William Haldimand; and I believe that it will always be so. Bad passions indulged, and success wrongfully acquired, will always bring their punishment; perhaps not death; but there may be some things worse than death.

The reader need hardly be told the fate of the principal personages still left living. For Kate and Charles, for Henry Haldimand and Henrietta, for Lord Martindale and Alice Richmond, let imagination paint pleasant scenes. Those pleasant scenes came somewhat slowly; for the melancholy events which preceded them left their dark memories. Such memories, however, were but like the long morning shadows, diminishing as the sun rises.

It was while the sad impressions were fading away, and before Kate could give her heart up with any confidence to the anti-

cipation of the happiness that was in store for her with him she loved, that she and her father, sitting in Haldistow Hall, read the letter which her mother had left on the step of Sir John Haldimand's house. It was a very painful task to poor Mr. Greenshield; and the tears more than once rose in his eyes, though he would fain have repressed them in the presence of Colonel Haldimand and his father. As the letter was not very long, it may as well be given here, as the only explanation needful of anything that is obscure in the story. It was to the following effect:

“I know not what to say or what to write. I dare not call you ‘My dear Uncle,’ for the only letter I have received from my father, denouncing his terrible curses upon my head, tells me that your indignation at my conduct is as great as his. Yet dear, most dear, you are to me, although I have lost your affection; and the memory of your generous kindness and

frequent interference in my behalf will never pass away. It is that memory which prompts me, in a sad and terrible moment, even while committing an act which in your eyes must seem wicked, and which wrings my very heart to think of, to rely upon you, to trust to your noble nature and your kind feelings, for the aid which no other human being will afford me.

“First, however, let me say a few words to palliate, if I cannot excuse, the conduct which has incurred your anger and my father’s. You have seen, my dear uncle, the treatment I experienced at my father’s hands before my dear mother’s death. But you can form no notion of what it became afterwards, of how terrible was the trial when I was left alone, without companion, without support, without guidance, to endure increased harshness and severity. My heart seemed broken; my brain seemed giving way.

I had long known Mr. Graham. He was a great favourite of my mother’s; and, speak-

ing of him only two days before her death, she said, 'I could have died happy, my child, if I had seen you the wife of such a man as that.' This was the first time that the thought of becoming his wife ever crossed my mind. After my mother's death, Mr. Graham was still permitted to visit at the house, and sometimes dined with my father. I saw he pitied me; that his cheek would suddenly grow red, and his lip quiver, when he thought me treated unjustly; and one day, just fourteen months ago, he was in the house when one of my father's violent fits of rage broke forth; and his words were more terrible than if he had struck me. I know not, indeed, what I had done to offend him; but he declared that he wished God would deliver him of me for ever.

" Mr. Graham went away abruptly; and I thought I should have died with grief and terror. I was left in my room all the evening. I was not even sent for at the dinner hour, and dared not go down without. But one of the maids

brought me some food in my own room, and at the same time put down a note before me. It was from Mr. Graham. It told me that he loved me, had loved me long ; but that, as his fortune and his station were inferior to mine, he had never ventured in any way to shew his affection till he heard the words which my father had uttered that morning, which he thought justified him in offering me another home, however humble. He said he had competence, though not riches, and that, if I could make up my mind to become his wife, he would do all that the warmest affection could, to render my future life happier than the past.

I felt at that moment that I loved him. I will own, my dear uncle, I did not even hesitate. I was sensible that I could endure no more ; and I remembered that my father himself had called upon God to deliver him of me, though I had never done anything intentionally to offend him. I therefore wrote to Mr. Graham, telling him all my feelings, perhaps too plainly ; and

the maid who had brought his letter carried mine. The rest was easily arranged. The banns were published in the parish church ; but, as my father never entered its doors, he did not hear them ; and, after a sad parting with my dear little brother, I stole away from my wretched home, and became the wife of Mr. Graham.

“ Then my father’s persecution of us began. He never ceased till he ruined my husband. He even prejudiced you against us ; and we continued falling daily into poverty, till my husband was forced to seek some new means of life ; and the only thing that offered, led him to a foreign land. I was not in a state to accompany him ; and, giving me all the money he possessed, except what was absolutely necessary for his journey, he left me to follow him as soon as possible, after my child was born.

Not even yet, however, was I to have peace. As soon as my husband was gone, my father, knowing me to be without protection, sought

to get me into his power. I learned, from authority that I could trust, that he was trying to prove me insane ; and I had no resource but to fly and hide myself till my child was born. Many things brought about expenses which had not been anticipated ; and now that I am called upon to join my husband as speedily as possible, I must do so in the humblest manner. I must find my way to the port on foot, or by some carrier's cart. I have no means of providing comforts of any kind for my child ; and I feel that, were I to take her with me—if I suffered my selfish love to induce me to do so—I should sacrifice her life to my own temporary happiness. The lady and her daughter-in-law with whom I lodge, would gladly keep her for me with a daughter of the latter ; but they are very, very poor ; and I have taken my resolution. I will lay her as a suppliant on your threshold. Her innocence and her youth will plead for her, and for me also. Guard her ! Oh ! guard her, my dear un-

cle, carefully ! Educate her till I can claim her even as a cotter's child. I ask no more ; and, if I have not much mistaken your heart, you will not, in spite of my faults, refuse this to one whom you used once to call

“ YOUR EMILY.”

“ P.S. — One thing I have forgotten to mention. I beseech you, on no account to suffer any one to know who she is. I fear my father. There is nothing that he would not do to punish me ; and I tremble to think of what might happen if he became aware of my child's existence in England. He is not likely to find her at Haldistow ; for, the last time he heard of me, I was quite on the other side of the country.”

On this was written, in the hand of Sir John Haldimand : “ A gross and terrible falsehood has been told to this dear child. I have had no communication with my brother respecting her, did not even hear

of her marriage till last month, and, God knows, would have taken her to my heart and provided for her amply, had I been aware of her distress. I must see if news can be obtained of her and her husband."

Below this was written in a much fresher ink : "Letter from my poor niece, Emily, lost at sea, 13th November, 17—."

Mr. Greenshield laid his finger on the last paragraph, with a deep sigh ; and, after a pause, he said, "I was absent for fifteen years, my dear child, as I told you before. Wealth seemed to flow in upon me now that happiness had departed. I was serviceable to a great house at Rio in many journeys that I made for them ; and the success of some ventures of my own enabled me to become a partner in the firm. The head partner, an old man, learned entirely to depend upon me both for counsel and exertion ; and, at his death, much to my surprise, left me the whole of his great wealth upon the condition of taking his name. In the meantime,

I was not left in ignorance of your fate, my dear girl ; for, besides the information which I received on more than one occasion from good Mrs. Mainwairing, daughter-in-law of the old lady in whose house you were born, my beloved Emily, when on the eve of embarking in a small and wretched vessel, wrote to me by the mail the last letter which was ever to come from her hands. I have it here," he continued, taking a letter from his pocket-book, " and you shall read it yourself, my dear Kate ; for it explains what would otherwise seem inexplicable. But first let me tell you that, about a fortnight before the date of this, your dear mother had written to me a full account of what she had done in placing you under her uncle's protection ; and she had contrived to obtain in that time the fullest assurance that Sir John had not only received you with kindness, but appeared to have adopted you as a daughter. I may add that good Mrs. Mainwairing, although she did not abso-

lutely know that you were the child born in her mother-in-law's house, concluded that you were so from the reports which reached Dingle of your appearance in Haldistow ; and that she never ceased to seek for every intelligence concerning your education and fate. There is your dear mother's last letter, my child. Take it and read it, but not aloud."

Kate took the letter with a trembling hand ; and, while her father covered his eyes and remained profoundly silent, she read as follows :

" MY BELOVED HUSBAND,

" To-morrow I embark ; and it is very natural that I should feel some terrors. They are greater, I will own, than I had anticipated. I feel a dread—I must not, I will not, call it a foreboding—that we may never meet again. With this feeling strongly upon me, I snatch a moment from all the sore fatigues of preparation, to give you the last intelligence

of myself and our dear child. As the mail packets go much quicker than the merchant ships, this will reach you sooner than I can ; therefore do not let any little delay in my coming alarm you. I feel that my fears are very weak, though I cannot shake them off ; but I am well in health—better, far better, than I could have expected to be.

“ Our dear child is well, too. I have contrived to get information concerning her through the carrier who has brought my little stock of clothes. My dear, excellent uncle has not only received her with a father’s tenderness, engaged a good married woman of the village as her nurse, and shown her the greatest kindness, but goes down to see her every day ; and the rumour runs amongst the servants and country people that he has adopted her as his child. This ought to be looked upon as a great blessing by us. Indeed, it is so by me ; and it has made me more cheerful. But yet human life and all its circum-

stances are so uncertain that I may venture, without sinful despondency, to make one earnest request in case we should never meet again.

“ I fear my father : I have terrible apprehensions regarding the result in case he should ever discover that the dear infant I have left at Haldistow is our child. You know what he is. You know how remorselessly, how artfully, he can pursue any one he hates. My uncle, I am sure, will keep the secret; and what I have to entreat is this, that if ever you return to England after my death, you will leave the dear child with my uncle; nay more, my beloved husband, that you will struggle against a father’s feelings, and not even claim her or announce that she is your own so long as my father lives—unless, indeed, she should ever by any chance fall into his hands. Then fly to her; tear her from him; let her not dwell under his roof; let him not have any part in her education. The very thought of her being in his power would drive me mad with

terror. But, so long as my dear uncle lives, protects, and cherishes her, leave her with him; and do not, if my father be still living, recognize her as our child. Sir John can provide for her far better than you will ever be able to do. He will be able, too, to protect her better than you can. After my father's death, act as you please. I cannot wish my husband not to enjoy that which I so much long for, the unutterable felicity of pressing our dear Kate to his heart.

“ And now, my dear husband, farewell. If we meet again, you will find your Emily only the more strongly attached, only the more grateful for all your kindness and affection for her, from the sorrows she has brought upon you and the cares and anxieties we have both endured. If we never meet again, that God may ever bless and protect you, and recompense you for all you have done for me, will be the last prayer uttered by the lips of

“ Your own,

“ EMILY GRAHAM.”

Kate wept bitterly; and, after a long pause, her father gently took the letter from her hand and placed it in his pocket-book again.

“ I looked upon her request, my child,” he said, after a silence of some minutes, “ as a command from the dead ; but I could not refrain from seeing you. When I had sold all my possessions in the new world and returned to England, one of my first visits was to Haldistow. I had thought of you ; I had dreamed of you ; I had longed to clasp my child to my heart. The first time I saw you was in the church ; and the struggle in my bosom was so terrible that I was taken ill and forced to go away. But, as I saw and heard more, I found you so happy with your noble benefactor, and he so happy with and so proud of you, that I was reconciled in some degree to the terrible and difficult task which your dear mother had assigned to me. I resolved firmly to fulfil her request to the letter, to watch over you, to see you often, but to

wait patiently ere I informed you that I was your father. None knew the fact but good old Doctor Porteus, who had attended your mother at your birth, and on whom I called for information as soon as I returned to England. But he kept my secret well. In the whole of the past events, after strict examination, I can blame myself for only one thing. With the wild grief caused by the loss of my poor Emily was mingled a feeling of revengeful anger towards her father ; and I ordered her death and the manner thereof to be announced publicly in all the newspapers in England for the purpose, I will own, of trying to make his hard heart feel. I know not what was the result ; but I much repented the act. I regretted it at the time as soon as it was done, and tried to recall it ; but I was too late. My existence has been an unhappy one, my dear child ; and I have found that none of those things which men most estimate, nay, nor even those qualities which philosophers most eulogise,

can purchase happiness. I have had wealth, and it has not given it ; strength and health, but happiness has not come with them. I have been moderate in the enjoyment of all that has been bestowed upon me. I have never suffered time to hang idle on my hands. I have tried and succeeded in benefiting my fellow creatures. But the dark and painful memory of those earlier years has never faded away ; and the anguish of that hour in which I received the tidings of your poor mother's death is almost as fresh in my heart as ever. To you, Kate, I look to console, if you cannot brighten, the close of life."

" And let me share the task," said Colonel Haldimand, holding out his hand. " We have all griefs—if not to forget, yet to soften. Happiness, like gold, though alloyed, is yet to be found here ; and it is as well for every man, I am convinced, even in his highest joys, to be taught to say—Thank God, there is a hereafter !"



I have now but two or three other persons to mention.

Henry Haldimand soon recovered from his wound, though scarcely so rapidly as good Doctor Porteus expected. Another wounded man, however, was not so fortunate. Farmer Bagshot never fully recovered. By some process in nature, doubtless well known to surgeons, but which I cannot explain, his wound, though it healed, left his right arm fast fixed in the shoulder-socket, so as to disable him from moving it during the rest of his life. The rascal died a sot before he reached old age, and his worthy son lived to be hanged for highway robbery. Our friend, Tom Notbeame, went on to almost patriarchal days, as full of scraps of old ballads, and as fond of the gun and the fishing-rod, as ever. Sir John Haldimand had bequeathed him for life the house which he inhabited ; and he had every comfort around him ; but I cannot

help thinking that it was his taciturnity which aided to prolong his life ; and therefore the sooner I close this book the better.

THE END.

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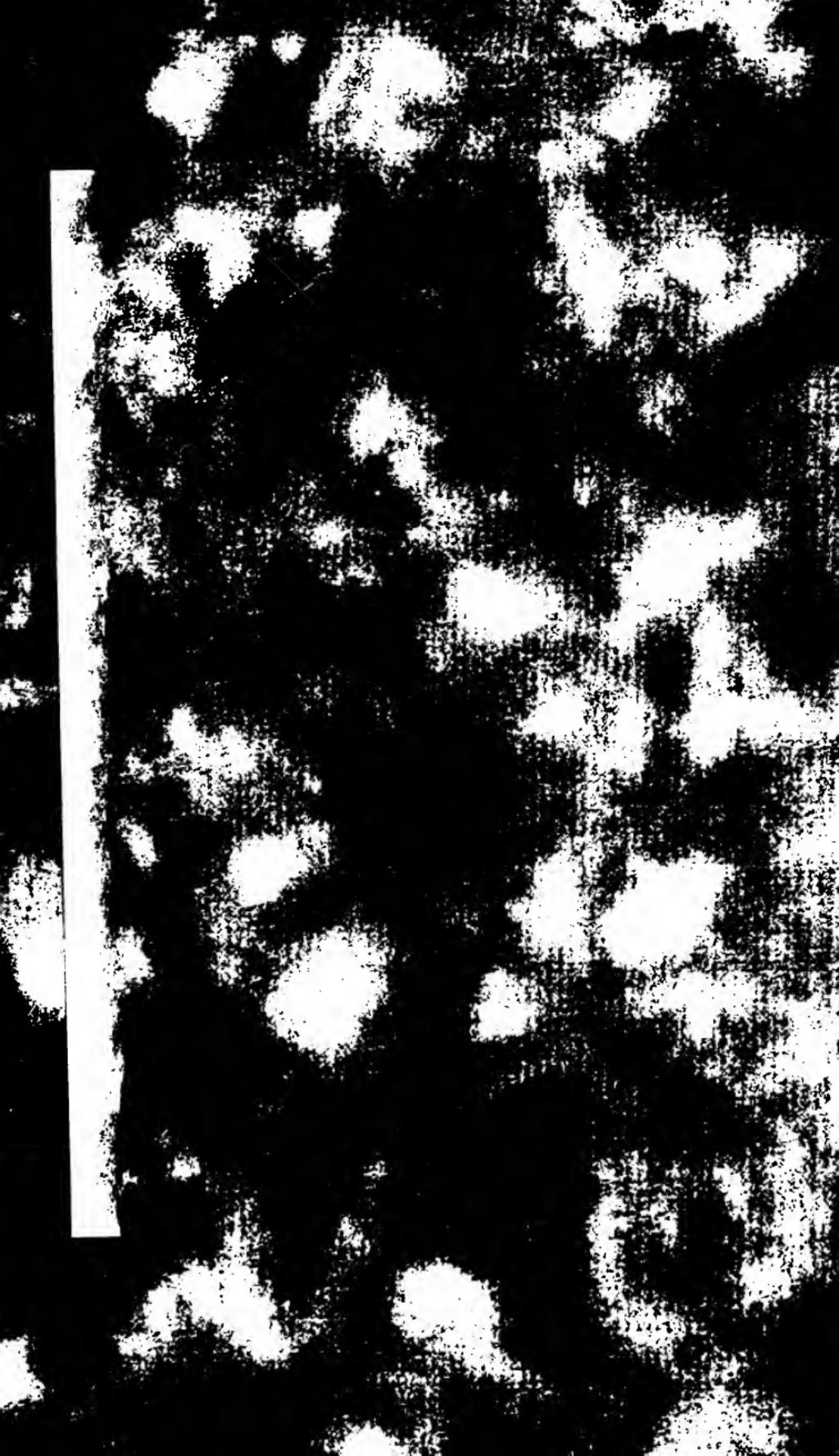
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